

# TALES OF CHANGING SEAS





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THE EXTRA HANDS OF THE  
*NEMESIS*



## THE EXTRA HANDS OF THE *NEMESIS*

THE steamship *Nemesis*, of two thousand five hundred and fifty tons register, and belonging to the port of London, had nearly finished her loading one foggy afternoon in a foggy November. She was at Tilbury, taking in a general cargo for Capetown and Australian ports, and as the last few cases were coming on board the skipper came on board too by way of the big gangway, close by which the second mate was standing.

"Is that the last of it?" asked the 'old man' gloomily.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Cade with equal gloominess. When a man is second mate at the age of fifty it is not surprising that he should be sulky.

"And it is time it was, for we're well down to our mark, and no mistake about it, sir."

Captain Jordan said nothing, but walked for'ard to his cabin and sat down wearily. He threw a bundle of papers on his table, and filling his pipe smoked for a few minutes. He was a fine, handsome, white-headed man of some fifty-two years, and had once been ambitious. Now he worked for Messrs. Gruddle, Shody & Company, and, as all

seamen knew, to work for them was to have lost all chances that following the sea affords even in these days.

"The swine," said old Jordan to himself, "oh, the swine that they are! I wish I could get even with them. If I could do that I could die happy. They are charitable, are they? Curse their charity! Ah, if I hadn't been so unlucky in my last employ!"

But that was it. He had been in the employ of a good firm with one bitterly unjust regulation. Any skipper of theirs who lost a ship, even through no fault of his own, had to go, and, though he had worked for them for twenty years, that was his fate when he piled up the *Grimshaw Hall* on the Manacles.

"And that's how they got me cheap," said Jordan. "And because poor Cade lost his master's certificate through an error of judgment they have him cheap, and they have my old chum Thripp cheap in the same way. Oh, they are a precious lot of swine, and I wish I had 'em here with me when we are out at sea. I'd tell 'em what I think of 'em, if I got the sack right off and had to ship before the mast."

Thripp the mate came by the cabin, and the skipper called to him.

"Yes, sir," said Thripp.

"Come in a moment," said Jordan. "I've something to tell you, something that will cheer you up and make you like the firm better than ever."

Thripp was also as grey as a badger, but not through age. He, too, had been a master mariner, and had lost his first and only command by running

her against an iceberg in a fog. He had had orders to make a passage at all costs, but those orders were verbal, and his owners showed in court printed instructions that bade all their employees use extra caution in time of fog even if a slow passage were the result. Therefore Messrs. Gruddle, Shody & Company got him cheap too.

"What's their charity now?" asked Thripp scornfully.

"It begins at home, as usual," replied the skipper. "They have cut you and me down thirty bob a month and Cade a quid."

Thripp sighed, and then swore.

"Well, we have both had our certificates suspended," said Jordan bitterly, "so what can we expect? Men like us are every owner's dogs, and they know it. I'm half a mind to quit."

"I've got a wife," said Thripp, "and I can't put the poor old girl in the workhouse."

Jordan had never been married, and was glad of it now.

"I once had a chance to marry a lady with ships of her own," he said thoughtfully, "and I was fool enough to prefer to run alone. But it is wonderful how fond that woman was of me, Thripp. She proposed to me three times."

"You don't say so," said Thripp.

"Fact, I assure you," replied Jordan. "She was as ugly as a freak, and fat enough to make a livin' in a show, so I couldn't do it, you see."

"I see," sighed Thripp; "but it was a pity."

"An awful pity," said the skipper. "And even now she ain't forgot me, though it is ten years ago

and more since we first met. Every Christmas she sends me a puddin' and a bottle of rum that would make your hair curl, ninety over proof at least, and with the aroma of a West Injies sugar plantation. I wonder if she has any sort of a notion how I've come down in life so as to be at the mercy of a Jew like Gruddle? "

Cade came along and reported that the last of the cargo was aboard and that the hatches were on. Jordan called him in and gave him a tot of whisky, and broke the news to him that his wages had had another cut. But the second mate said nothing at all. He shook his head and went out.

"His spirit is broke," said Jordan gloomily.

"Oh no," said Thrupp, "it's only that he hasn't the words, poor chap. Well, it ain't any wonder. I haven't any myself. But if I ran across Gruddle my opinion is that I should find 'em in spite of my bein' a married man."

"Last week they was talkin' of comin' along with us as far as Gib," said Jordan. "They are mighty proud of this steamer that I know they got by fraud and diddlin' out of Johns and Mackie. Oh, they are very proud of her, and they see money in her."

"If they had come," said Thrupp savagely, "I should have said something or bust."

"Better to bust, I suppose," replied the skipper, "though I own that if I knew they was comin' with us I should be tempted to say a lot that's now inside me boilin'. I wish they was, I own it. I own it freely, even if I got the sack."

He relapsed on the ship's papers, and Thrupp



went out to attend to the duties of a conscientious mate on the eve of going to sea. He passed a telegraph boy on the main-deck and directed the lad to the captain's cabin. Destiny in a uniform thanked him and whistled. When he had found the skipper and old Jordan had read the message he was the one who whistled. But he did not do so from want of thought by any means. He looked as savage as a trapped weasel, and as black as a nigger on a dark night.

"Well, I'm damned," said Jordan, "so they are goin' to do it after all! And I don't know that I wish it now!"

He whistled again and rang the bell for the steward, who was another of the firm's cheap bargains. He had been in prison, in company with a former captain of his, for disposing of stores in foreign parts and feeding the crew on something that the illicit purchaser threw into the bargain. He was now trying to regain his lost reputation at the wages of an ordinary seaman.

"Steward," said the skipper, "I want you to read this telegram, and arrange for it as best you can. They will be with us for six days or thereabouts."

For the wire was from Mr. Gruddle, and it stated that the four partners were going with them as far as Gibraltar.

"Shall we 'ave to get in anythin' special for them in the way of provisions, sir?" asked the steward.

The 'old man' scratched his head and said that he thought so.

"As you know, Smith, what we have to eat is horrid bad," he said thoughtfully.

"It is, sir," replied Smith. "It ain't fit for pigs."

Jordan stood thinking for a minute. Then he turned to Smith.

"On the whole, Smith, I think I'd get nothing. I'd like 'em to see the kind of stuff they buy for us. Perhaps it will do them good. It don't do us any. Get nothin', Smith."

"Very well, sir," said the steward with a grin. He turned to go, and Jordan stopped him.

"I suppose, Smith, that some of the grub is worse than the rest?" he asked.

"Lord bless you, sir, the men's grub is fair poison."

"Is it now?" said the skipper. "Do you know, Smith, I think we'll eat what the men do for the passage as far as Gibraltar. I'll speak to Mr. Thripp and Mr. Cade, and I dare say they won't mind just for a little while."

"I could put you and them somethin' better in your cabin, sir, if the other stuff made you *very* sick," suggested Smith.

"So you could. To be sure you could," said Jordan. "That's a very good idea of yours, Smith. But fix up their berths. They will be aboard to-morrow mornin'."

He broke the news to the mates that the whole firm was coming on a little trip with them, and when he asked them if they had any objection to the fare that Smith proposed to give them for those few days they said they would be glad to see it

on the table. They thought almost happily of the face that Gruddle would put on when he saw the measly and forbidden pork. They had visions of Shody, who was a wholesale grocer as well as a shipowner, when he sampled the stores that he supplied the firm with. They smiled to think of Sloggett and Butterworth, the junior partners, who promised to be quite as bad as their elders by and by, and were known to be fond of high feeding. The only mistake they fell into about the whole body of the firm was that they took them for fools who did not know what sort of food they gave their officers and crews. For next morning at nine o'clock a number of fascinating looking cases were brought on board, on which was the name of a well-known provision merchant. And with the cases which obviously contained provisions there were some which quite as obviously held champagne. The 'old man' and the two mates looked at this consignment and their jaws dropped.

"Our scheme ain't worth a cent," said Jordan sadly.

"It might be worse, though," said Thripp; "we'll get some of this lot, of course."

"Do you think so?" asked Jordan sadly.

"Of course I do," said Thripp indignantly. "Whatever kind of swabs they are, they ain't surely so measly as to grub on this in our very presence and see us eat the other muck?"

The skipper smiled a slow and bitter smile.

"Thripp, you are a good seaman, but as a judge of humanity you ain't in it with Cade. All you and me will get of this lot will be the smell of it."

An hour later the owners came on board and were received with the humility due to such great men, who owned ships and shops and had houses in Croydon, and reputations which smelt in heaven like a tallow refining factory. The very deck hands who brought their luggage on board cursed them under their breath, and would have been glad to do it openly. Then, as the tide served, the *Nemesis* cast off from the wharf and made her way out into the stream, and started on her most memorable trip. If all the folks connected with the sea who knew the character of the men who owned her had also known that they were on board, and what was going to happen before they got back to England again, she and they would have got a more lively send-off than she did get.

The partners were in a very happy frame of mind, and showed it. They had got hold of the *Nemesis* cheap and were going to make money out of her. They had their officers and crew on the cheap as well, and it warmed their hearts to think of the price that they had provisioned her at in these hard times. Everything on board the *Nemesis* was cheap except the grub they had sent on board for their own use, and even that had been paid for by a creditor as a means of getting the firm to renew a bill. It was quite certain the firm knew their way about the dark alleys of this world. Gruddle had a cent-per-cent grin on his oily face, and fat Shody smiled like a hyena out on a holiday, and the two more gentlemanly-looking members of the firm laughed jovially.

"It's a great idea this," said Sloggett. "We're

going to 'ave an ideal 'oliday and pay nothin' for it, and when we get to Gibraltar we will put the screw on Garcia & Company, and show them that we are not to be played with. Oh, this was a good idea of yours, Butterworth, and I congratulate you on it."

They were shown their berths by the scared and obsequious steward, and they changed their frock-coats and high hats, without which they could not move a step, and put on more suitable garments. Gruddle, for instance, put on patent leather shoes and spats, which with black trousers and a loud check coat looked exceedingly striking. He wore a Royal Yacht Squadron cap, to which he had as much right as to a Field Marshal's uniform. It suited his style of Oriental beauty as much as that would have done, and he went on deck as pleased as Punch. He felt every inch a sailor. The others followed him, and were almost as remarkable to look at in their own way. Shody, who was a very fat man, was in knickerbockers and shooting-boots, and wore a fur-lined overcoat; while Sloggett was adorned in a new yachtsman's rig-out which made him look like a pallid shop-walker. Butterworth was the only one who stuck to ordinary clothes, and, as a consequence, he looked like a gentleman beside the others. It was an illusion, of course, for he wasn't a gentleman by any means. On the contrary, he was a member of the firm, and a rising man in that branch of the shipping world which makes its money out of sinking ships.

"'Ow long will it be before we are in fine weather?" he asked as he stared at the docks and warehouses. But no one knew, and just then there

was no one to ask, for all the officers had their hands full. The river was thick with traffic, and there was enough mist on the water to make navigation a little risky.

"Oh, give me sunlight," said Gruddle. "When the sun shineth I'm almotht ath happy ath when I turn a loth into a profit by attention to detailth."

His partners laughed.

"There is nothing like an 'oliday on the cheap, with a free mind," said Shody. "I likes an 'oliday, I own, but when it costs me money I ain't as 'appy as when it costs someone else money."

"There is one thing about this vessel that fills me with a just pride," said Gruddle, "and that is that her wages bill per month is prob'ly thirty-three and a third per cent. under that of any vessel of hequal tonnage sailin' out of London this day. And it's done without meanness too, all on account of my notion of givin' work to the unfortunate at a trifle under current rates. This is the only firm in London that can be charitable and 'ave the name for it, and make money out of it."

They said that was so, and they discussed the officers.

"All good men, if a trifle unfortunate," said Shody. "A year ago who would 'ave believed that we could 'ave got a man like Jordan for what we pay 'im? The very hidea would 'ave been laughed at. But he 'as an accident that wasn't 'is fault, and down comes 'is price, and we nip in, and get a real good man cheap as dirt, and keep 'im off the streets so to speak. Oh, Gruddle, it was a great idea of yours; and to give that poor unfort'nit

steward a job when 'e came out of chokey was real noble of you."

"So it wath," said Gruddle, "but I wath alwayth soft-'earted if I didn't lose money by it."

"So you were," said Shody warmly. "Do you remember 'ow you gave poor Jenkins time to borrow money of his relatives w'en by all rights you ought to 'ave given 'im into charge, and 'e would 'ave got ten years as safe as a bill of Rothschild's?"

In such reminiscences of the firm's noble efforts on the part of suffering and erring humanity they passed an agreeable hour, and then went below and cracked a bottle of champagne. Soon afterwards it was time for lunch, and Butterworth saw to the arrangements of their special table, and got things out to be cooked. The skipper came down for a moment while they were eating, and Gruddle called him over to their table.

"Will you 'ave a glass of champagne, captain?" he asked.

"With pleasure, sir," said the white-headed old skipper, who looked like a thoroughbred beside any one of them.

"Ah, I thought you would," said Gruddle warmly. "I reckon you 'ave not tasted it since you wrecked the *Grimshaw* 'All on the Manacles, captain. And don't you forget that if you wreckths the *Nemesis* you won't taste much but skilly and water for the rest of your life. Pour 'im out a glass, Sloggett, if you can spare it."

Jordan drank the wine, and it nearly choked him. When he got out of their sight he spat on the deck, and went upon the bridge alongside the pilot

shivering. His hands were clenched and he was almost sick with rage.

The mud-pilot saw that there was something wrong.

"Are you ill, captain?" he asked.

"I've 'ad a blow," said the old skipper. "I've 'ad a blow."

The pilot thought he had had bad news, and was sorry for him.

"No, not bad news," said poor old Jordan. "It ain't no news to me. Somebody said somethin' that puts things in a new light to me."

He chewed the cud of unutterable bitterness and wished he was dead. He did not go below again till they were well in the Channel, and he ate no supper. He could not get it down. He sent for Thripp to his cabin, and burst out on the mate with the intolerable insults that he had had to put up with.

"We're their dogs," said Thripp bitterly; "but if I am married I'll not put up with much, sir. They're half drunk by now, and are playin' cards and drinkin' more, and Dixon is cryin' in his pantry because one of 'em started bullyin' him about something, and said that he was a hard bargain at any price."

"I wish I could get even, oh, I do wish it," said old Jordan. "Did you ever hear of such mean dogs in all your life?"

"Only in books, sir," said the mate thoughtfully. "I recollect in some book readin' about a man like Gruddle, but I forget what book it was. But I do remember that someone knocked the man down that was as bad as Gruddle. I enjoyed that book amazin'ly, sir."



"I wish you knew the name of it," said the skipper. "But if I 'ad as much money laid by as would bring me in fifteen shillin's a week I'd show you something better than anythin' you ever read in a book, Thripp. You mark my words, I would."

"What would you show me, sir?" asked the mate eagerly.

• But old Jordan sighed.

"What's the good of thinking of pure enjoyment when one ain't in the least likely to get the chance of havin' it? We must put up with 'em, Thripp. After all it's only to Gibraltar, and after that we are by ourselves. I hope I shan't explode before then."

And Thripp went away to talk to the engineer, and to try to remember the name of the book in which someone got his deserts. While he was doing that the partners played cards and drank more than was good for them, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They told Thripp, when he came below, that the whole ship was disgracefully dirty, and that if he wanted to keep his job he had better see to it at once. As they screwed him down on paint and all stores necessary to prevent a vessel looking as bad as a house in Chancery, this naturally did not cheer him up. Dixon was really in tears because Gruddle swore at him in the most horrid way without any reason, except that he had sworn at Shody and had got the worst of it. Cade accidentally ran into Butterworth, who was sneaking round to see if he could find anything to complain about, and Butterworth promptly said he was a clumsy hound. According to Jordan, Cade's spirit was broken, but this was more than he could stand even from one of

the owners. He told Butterworth to go where it was a deal hotter than the Red Sea in July. He did not use any circumlocution about it either, and Butterworth was in a fury. He complained to the skipper, and Jordan had the greatest difficulty in refraining from endorsing Cade's hasty recommendation of a suitable climate for the junior partner. But he did refrain.

"I am very sorry that he should have so far forgotten himself," said Jordan. "I will speak to him at once."

"The insolent fool must apologize," said Butterworth; and Jordan said that Mr. Cade would undoubtedly see that that was his duty. He called for Cade, and Cade's spirit seemed to have quite bucked up. He flatly declined to apologize unless Mr. Butterworth first did so for "calling him out of his name."

"He said I was a clumsy hound," said Cade.

"So you are," said Butterworth, "and I say it again."

"Do you hear that, Captain Jordan?" asked Cade. "Is an officer in this vessel or in any other to be spoke to like that before the men? Before I'll apologize I'll see that sailor-robber in hell, sir."

The poor skipper danced in his anxiety to preserve the peace.

"Mr. Cade, you mustn't. I order you to hold your tongue, sir. Go to your cabin, sir, and after some reflection I am sure you will offer an apology to Mr. Butterworth."

"I'll see him damned first," said Cade as he marched off.

"I sack you! I discharge you!" roared Butterworth, who was in a blind fury.

"Discharge your grandmother," said Cade discourteously. "You can't do it. I'm on the ship's papers. And who are you, anyhow?"

The owners held a consultation in the cabin when Butterworth came below with his story of the second mate's insolence and insubordination.

"Let us be clear as to 'ow it occurred," said Gruddle. "Now, Butterworth, tell us what it was."

"He ran against me, and I remonstrated, and he told me to go to hell," said the fuming Butterworth.

"That ith very bad, very 'ighly improper," said Gruddle. "But 'ow did you remonthtrate? Did you 'it 'im?"

"Certainly not," said the junior partner warmly; "all I said was that he was clumsy."

Shody and Sloggett said that Cade must be sacked at once, or at least as soon as they got to Gibraltar. Gruddle, who knew a deal more than they did about most things in the way of the law and business, shook his head.

"It will sound very queer to you," said Gruddle, "but the truth of the matter ith that I don't think we can thack 'im. The man 'ath a contract for the voyage, and the only one that can thack 'im ith the captain."

The rest said this was absurd. Were they not the owners, and could they not do as they pleased, with every man-jack on board? And even if Gruddle was right, they could tell the captain to dump Cade over the side at Gibraltar.

"Well, of course we can do that," said Gruddle.

"And we will," said the outraged Butterworth.

"I think we had better 'ave Jordan in now and tell 'im what to do."

They sent for the skipper, and the poor old chap came down and stood up before them. With his big white beard and his ruddy handsome face he looked like a captive Viking before a tribunal of mean tradesmen.

"This 'ere conduct of the second mate ith what we've called you down about," said Gruddle. "'E wath very rude to Mr. Butterworth; told 'im, in fact, to go to 'ell, w'ich can't be put up with."

"And ain't goin' to be," said the offended partner. "We 'ave sacked 'im, and 'e must be sent ashore at Gibraltar and another one found."

Jordan had the very strongest inclination to tell Butterworth exactly what Cade had told him. But he restrained himself, and suggested to them that it would probably take some time to pick up a new second mate at Gib, whereas they had arranged not to enter but to signal for a boat for them to go ashore in. It was Shody who saw the way out and brought them all to grief.

"Cade can come ashore with us," he said with a fat and happy smile, "and you needn't wait to get another man in 'is place, captain. I always understood that the second mate was on'y a kind of deputy for the skipper, and I see no reason w'y 'e couldn't be done without altogether."

"That's a very good idea of yours, Shody," said Sloggett and Butterworth in the same breath; "and I daresay the captain will see that it is."

But Jordan was breathless with indignation. Shody spoke for him.

"I always did think," said Shody, "that the captain of any vessel 'ad much too easy a time of it. I don't see no reason why 'e shouldn't stand his watch same as the mate. The captain's job is an easy one, and a well paid one. I should say it was an overpaid one. 'Avin' a second mate is like 'avin' a fifth wheel to a coach, and the job should be abolished. This is a good chance of inauguratin' an entirely new system, and a reform that will save money."

The only one of them who thought this was going too far was Gruddle, and he did not care to look Jordan in the face. When he did look at the captain it was because he had to, and because Jordan demanded it. The old man's face was livid with rage, and he struck the table a resounding blow that made the glasses dance. The partners shrank back from him as if he was a wild elephant, and Gruddle went as white as the skipper's beard.

"You infernal hogs," said the skipper, "you infernal hogs, I'm sorry I ever saw one of you! You are a disgrace to the name of Englishmen, and—and I despise you!"

He looked as if he did; there was no mistake about that, and he also looked as if he was about to assault the whole gang of them. The two junior partners jumped to their feet not so much to be prepared to defend themselves as to run away. Jordan might be somewhat past his best, but he was still as strong as a bull and as big as any two of them in spite of Shody's fat. He was distinctly dangerous.

" 'Ow, 'ow dare you on our ship? " asked Shody with a poor attempt at dignity. " Partners, our kindness 'as been throwed away, bestowed on an hunworthy object."

" Shut up, or I'll make you," roared the old skipper. " I won't be spoke to by a lot of hogs such as you, with your talk of charity and your beastly manners. You can sack me if you like, but you don't sack the second mate while I am captain of this vessel, so I tell you."

" We—we discharge you," said Butterworth furiously. " We discharge him, don't we? "

They said that they did, and for a second the skipper was about to take his dismissal lying down. But the next moment he refused to do anything of the sort. He saw the strength of his position where they naturally only saw his weakness. He laughed a little angrily, but still he laughed, and the sound outraged the firm.

" You will laugh on the wrong side of your face when you are on the street," said Shody. And just then Jordan heard Cade enter his cabin. He laughed again, this time much more naturally, and called to the second mate, who came in looking as black as a thundercloud.

" Mr. Cade," said the skipper in almost his usual mild tone of voice.

" Yes, sir," replied Cade.

" Would you be so good, Mr. Cade, as to tell me who I am? "

Cade stared, and so did the partners.

" Who you are, sir? " stammered the second greaser in great amazement.

"Yes, who I am," repeated the skipper.

"Why, you are Captain Jordan, sir," said Cade, still out of soundings.

"Of what ship, Mr. Cade?"

"Of this one, sir," replied Cade, who hoped that the skipper hadn't gone mad.

"Exactly so, Mr. Cade," said the 'old man, who had by this time made up his mind to a very definite course of action. "You hear that, gentlemen?"

They did hear it, but were not much wiser. They looked at each other in some amazement.

"What do you mean, you old fool?" asked Sloggett. But Jordan did not answer him. He spoke again to Cade.

"And if I am the skipper of this boat," he went on, "who are these gentlemen who are givin' me directions to put you ashore at Gib?"

Cade eyed them malevolently, and for the first time a glimpse of the captain's meaning came to him. His face lightened, and he smiled grimly.

"Why, they are only passengers," he said.

"Right the very first time," said Jordan with a pleasant smile: "that is what they are here, and no mistake about it. And as passengers, Mr. Cade, what authority have they?"

"Not so much as the cook," said Cade.

The skipper, who had quite recovered his temper, turned to the partners.

"You hear that, gentlemen?" he asked.

They did hear it, and it sounded very absurd to all of them but old Gruddle, who did know something of the ways of the sea and the laws of it.

"You are an old fool," said Butterworth; "and when we get to Gibraltar you will find it out too, quick."

The skipper grinned quite amiably. As he had now made up his mind, he reverted to the superiority of tone which had distinguished him when he was captain of the *Grimshaw Hall*.

"Yes, I shall find it out—when I get ' to Gibraltar," said Jordan, with ample and deadly courtesy, and saying that he went out of the saloon and called Cade to follow him. When they came out on deck he put his hand on the second mate's shoulder.

"I ain't goin' to Gibraltar at all, Mr. Cade," he said with a nod, and Cade gasped.

"Ain't you, sir?" he asked after a long pause of astonishment.

"Not much, I'm not," said Jordan. "I've put up with a deal, but I'll show 'em now who's the boss here. I got orders for Capetown and Sydney, and if they choose to come on board as passengers and tell me to go elsewhere I don't choose to do it, and that is all there is to it. Damn their eyes!"

"Amen, sir," said Cade. "To think that Butterworth called me a clumsy hound!"

"He did," said the skipper. "But I'll give you a chance of gettin' even before you are a week older. You see if I don't."

And in the cabin the partners were staring at each other in great surprise.

"This is mutiny," said Sloggett. But Gruddle growled.



"Don't be an ath, Sloggett," said the senior partner. "'Ow can a captain be guilty of mutiny? The very idea ith abthurd."

So it was, of course.

"I don't believe he will go into Gibraltar at all," said Gruddle with a gasp. "You chaps 'ave put the old chap'th back up, and when 'e ith mad 'e'th capable of anything."

"He wouldn't dare," said Butterworth. "Do you mean he will take us on to Capetown?"

"That's what I do mean," sighed the wretched senior partner, who did not find that he enjoyed the sea at all. "That is exactly wot I do mean."

"Good Lord," said Shody, "and there ain't enough decent grub to do more than take us to Gibraltar."

"Thith ith a very 'orrid situation," said Gruddle, "and we oweth it entirely to you, Butterworth, for quarrellin' with the second mate. I believe you done a lot more than call him clumthy. I'll lay oddth you was grothly insultin', ath you alwayth are."

The others turned on Butterworth and said that they believed it too, and the unhappy Butterworth acknowledged that he had called Cade a hound.

"I'm right as uthual," said Gruddle; "and if I know my man no apology will do any good. I can thee that they are thavage becauthe we cut down their wageth. I've a good mind to raithe 'em again till we get a chanthe to cut 'em down thafely. We was foolth to come this 'ere trip, and we owe it all to Butterworth who thuggethted it."

Butterworth got it all round, and was in an extreme state of wretchedness.

"I think that if Butterworth is a gent, as we are all ready to believe," said Shody, "that 'e will go at once and apologize to that beast of a second mate; and we can tell the skipper that we will raise 'is wages again—till we can sack 'im."

This seemed a very good idea to everyone but Butterworth.

"I never apologized to anyone, and I ain't goin' to begin with a man like Cade," said Butterworth stubbornly.

"You're not a man of business in the least," said Shody. "I always maintained that we lose more money by your manners, w'ich are those of a pig, than we ever gain by your sharp practice. And now, 'avin' got your partners into a 'orrid mess with a mad and insubordinate captain, you are prepared to see them eat muck on'y fit for sea-goin' folks. The on'y consolation is that you will 'ave to eat it yourself."

"Oh, Butterworth, do apologithe," said Gruddle with tears in his eyes; "do apologithe, for if you eat a little dirt in doin' tho it ith far better than eatin' all you will if we continue this 'orrid and dithathrouth trip."

The others agreed with Gruddle, and at last Butterworth was induced to put his pride in his pocket and try an apology on Cade.

"It won't work, I know it won't work," said the cause of all their woes. "That Cade 'as a down on me I know, and 'e isn't a gentleman and won't take an apology from one. But all the same I'll try, though I don't see why it should all be put on me. Men like these officers of ours think a deal

more of a few shillin's a week than a few cross words, and it was Gruddle who cut down their wages. I think it is Gruddle who should apologize."

But Gruddle argued that he had not called Cade a hound, and when Butterworth went off on his painful errand he turned to the others and said:

"The hidea of Butterworth thinkin' that 'e is a gentleman!"

They all shook their heads at the idea of Butterworth doing so, and told each other stories of his origin in a pawnshop in the Borough Road.

"And 'e 'asn't manners either," sighed Shody.

By this time it was noon, and Cade was on the bridge, while Thripp was in the skipper's cabin hearing a fuller account of the row than Cade had given him. Cade was in no frame of mind to receive an apology from anyone. He took things hard, and chewed over them horribly.

"Hound, clumsy hound, am I?" said Cade as he paced the bridge with his hands in his pockets. "I'd like to 'clumsy hound' him. Clumsy hound, and I didn't knock him down! Bein' married makes a coward of a man!"

He turned about to find the object of his wrath on the sacred bridge. It made him quite forget that he was married, and that Mrs. Cade was hard to deal with if the money was not forthcoming in due season. He stared at Butterworth in the most offensive way, and the apology with which the junior partner was primed stuck in his throat.

"What the devil do you want here?" asked Cade savagely. "Don't you know that this part of the

vessel is private? But perhaps you have come to say that you are sorry for callin' me out of my name just now, when I didn't knock you down as I should have done? "

It seemed peculiarly hard lines to Butterworth that his act of grace was to be discounted in this way, and as he was not by any means as big a coward as Gruddle or Shody he fired up at once.

" I was goin' to apologize, but now I won't, and I defy you to knock me down, and you are a clumsy hound, so there! "

He put up his hands a moment too late, for Cade made a jump like a buck and caught him full on the jaw, and the junior partner went down like a sack of coals. He got up again more quickly than was wise, and once more went down. This time he did not get up, though he was invited to do so with great politeness by the second mate. For when Cade had it all his own way, and had wiped out the sense of self-contempt which had lately been troubling him, he grew quite happy.

" Get up, dear, and let me knock you endways once more," he said in the most agreeable tones at his command. " But I see you won't, my chicken. You have had enough, and you may go now and send up your partners one by one, and I'll serve the sailor-robbin' scum in the same way. Get out of this, and next time don't forget that at the first crooked word, though it is only rams'-horns, I'll knock you as flat as a jib down-haul. This here bridge is private."

And Butterworth rose and staggered down to his partners with his hand to his jaw.

"I'm much happier than I was, and if the old girl cuts up rough at my gettin' the sack again, why all I have to say is that keelin' Butterworth over is worth double the money," said Cade joyfully.

By this time the skipper had come to a decision which would have pleased Cade even more than knocking the junior partner endways. Thripp said that he did not care if the skipper did it. In fact, he wanted him to do it, and did not care if it cost him his billet and he had to ship before the stick in a wind-jammer for the rest of his life. He also went on to say that it would be a joy to him always, and that it would be an equal joy to all hands.

"Then that's decided on," said the 'old man' firmly. "We ain't goin' into Gibraltar this trip, not by a hatful, and when their special grub gives out we'll decide what is to follow."

"Yes, sir," said the mate, and he turned in to get a snooze before it was his turn to go on watch again. Jordan walked into the saloon, and was passing the partners like a ship in full sail passing some mud-barges, when he was pulled up by Sloggett.

"Captain Jordan, Mr. Butterworth has been knocked down by the second mate."

"Oh, has he?" asked Jordan.

"Yes, I have," roared the unfortunate man, who had not got his apology out in time to save himself. "Yes, I 'ave, and when we get to Gibraltar I'll have 'im in gaol as sure as I'm one of the owners of this vessel."

Jordan was perfectly reckless, and cared nothing by now for any of them. He laughed, and walked on towards his cabin.

"Ain't you goin' to do nothin' about it?" asked Shody.

"Nothin'," said the skipper. "Serves the measly little swine right. I hope Mr. Cade will serve the lot of you the same way before we get to Capetown."

With that shot, which clean hulled them and made them quiver, he went into his cabin and slammed the door upon them.

"There, there, what did I tell you?" wailed Gruddle. "'E'th goin' to take uth on to Africa, and we can't thtop 'im."

The prospect of being shut in a ship with officers who totally refused to recognize that they had any status but passengers was very dreadful, but over and above that there was the question of what would become of the business, with none to attend to it but underpaid clerks who were not allowed to know the dark and secret ways of their employers. And then there was the question of the grub. Shody fairly quailed at the prospect. They turned on poor smitten Butterworth like one man, and if Cade needed any more revenge they gave it him.

"You must go and speak to the skipper, Butterworth," they said in chorus; "you must persuade him to act reasonable."

"Yes, and be knocked down again," said the wretched junior, whose head was aching as the result of Cade's hard fists. "'E's a much more powerful man than that overbearin' beast on the bridge, and I ain't goin' to be whippin' boy for any of you."

"But you got uth to come," urged Gruddle.

"I wish to 'eavens I 'ad died before I thought of

it," sighed Butterworth. "But who would 'ave thought as men like them, under our thumb so to speak, would 'ave taken things as they 'ave done? It ain't my fault."

But they said it was, and at last Gruddle with a groan suggested that they should raise the skipper's wages if he would be good and kind to them, and not ruin them by taking them to Africa.

"For don't let us disguithe it from ourthelves, it will be ruin or very near it. We'll get back and find ourthelves in the Court, without any of them billth provided for," said the senior partner. "Butterworth, I don't believe you ever tried to apologithe to the second mate at all."

"He knocked me down as soon as I come on the bridge," screamed Butterworth angrily.

"You thould 'ave apologithed to a man like that from a thafe dithtance," said the wise and sad Gruddle. "You 'ad no buthineth on the bridge, and you know it. 'Owever, I inthitht that you go and thepeak polite to the captain, who won't 'it you, I'm thure, while you are tho thwelled from what the thecond mate 'ath done."

It took quite a quarter of an hour's combined persuasion to make Butterworth put his head into the lion's den, and he only did it on the understanding that he was to be empowered to offer the skipper a rise of three pounds a month and an indemnity for his insubordination.

"Very well," the others agreed, "you can say we forgives him for his mutinous conduct, and won't take any steps in the matter if 'e lands us at Gib as arranged. And of course our sayin' so means

nothin', and we can 'ave 'im sacked at Capetown by cable, and put on the street."

Even then Butterworth was very uneasy, and demurred to interviewing the ferocious Jordan without some kind of an excuse.

" 'Adn't we better wait till 'e comes out to dinner? " urged Butterworth; " and then our speakin' will come natural, or more natural than now."

Sloggett looked up at this.

" Oh, if you are such a coward as to want an excuse I can give you one," he said. " I quite forgot till this very moment that I brought a letter from the office for this old scoundrel of a Jordan. So you can take it in, Butterworth."

But the junior partner did not like being called a coward after his encounter with the second mate, and he was very cross with Sloggett.

" Coward yourself," he said angrily. " Why don't you take it? I'll bet you 'aven't the pluck to call that Cade a clumsy 'ound."

" No more 'ave you, now," said Sloggett; " and if you like I'll take on your job with Jordan, and give 'im the letter myself."

" All right, you can," said Butterworth; " and I'll take five to three in sovs. that you don't get an 'idin'."

That no one offered to lay these odds made Sloggett very uncomfortable, but as he had undertaken the job he went through with it, though he did it with a very pale face. He took the letter from his pocket, without knowing that by so doing he was rendering their trip to Capetown a dead certainty and walked to the skipper's cabin. He paused for



moment before he knocked, and the junior partner of the unhappy firm laughed. That laugh gave Sloggett the necessary stimulus to action, and he tapped very mildly at Jordan's cabin.

"Come in," roared the skipper, in a voice like a distant thunderstorm, and Sloggett did as he was bid, and did it as mildly as he had knocked.

"Oh, captain, I forgot to tell you that I brought you a letter from the office which came just as I was leavin' it."

"Put it down, then," said the skipper in anything but a conciliatory tone. But Sloggett was not put off by that. He could not conceive that anyone would not come off his perch at the sound of money.

"I want to talk to you about raisin' your screw, captain," he said, with an obsequiousness which was very rare with him. "I want to talk with you on the subject of raisin' your screw."

"I don't want to have any conversation with you or any of your partners," said the skipper truculently; "and if you have anything to say on that or any other subject, you can say it when I come to dinner."

"Oh, very well," said Sloggett. "I am sorry I 'ave disturbed you, but I forgot to tell you that I 'ad a letter for you, and that was really why I came in."

"I told you to put it down, didn't I?" asked the skipper. "So do it and get."

Sloggett withdrew like a dog with his tail between his legs, and went back to his friends and reported that Jordan was mad and intractable. And in the meantime the "old man" took his letter and stared at it.

"By crumbs," said Jordan, "it's from the poor old girl that always wanted to marry me! It is three years since she proposed last, and I thought she had got tired of it. If she hasn't I'm blowed if I won't think of doin' it after all."

He opened the letter eagerly, and when he had read it he sighed and said:

"Poor old girl, well, well, well! Who would have thought it?"

He walked up and down his narrow cabin, and as he did so he shook his head. Nevertheless there was quite another look in his face from any he had worn since he had piled up the *Grimshaw Hall*. He stood quite upright, and threw back his shoulders and took in a long breath.

"I'm devilish glad that I broke with this gang of robbers before I knew," he said. "I feel like a man again. Poor old girl! I'm almost sorry that I did not marry her after all. I'll tell this to Thripp and Cade. They shall share in this or I'm a Dutchman of the very worst kind."

He walked past the sad consulting partners, and looked more haughty than ever, and yet more good-tempered.

"I'm very much afraid that he has 'ad good news in that letter," said Gruddle; "for if 'e has it may make 'im more hindeependent."

"I don't see 'ow 'e can be more independent than 'e 'as been," remarked Shody. "When a captain gets independent enough to call the firm that owns 'im an infernal lot of 'ogs, that seems to me the very 'eight of independence."

But, as a matter of fact, Jordan *was* more

independent. He went up to Thripp, who was on the bridge, with a curious expression of mixed joy and sadness.

"You remember that poor old girl that I told you of, Thripp?"

"The one that hankered to marry you?" asked Thripp.

"The same," said the skipper. "She has pegged out, the poor old girl, at least she says she has."

Thripp stared.

"What do you mean by that, sir? How could she say so?" he asked.

The skipper showed him the letter that he had just received.

"Sloggett brought it on board, and gave it me just now as he came crawlin' to my cabin and let on a lot of slush about raisin' my pay again that they had just cut down, because they have tumbled to the fact that I've a down on them and the likes of them, and mean to get even by takin' them to Capetown. And she says in the letter that she isn't long for this weary, lonely world (those are her words, and they make me feel as if I'd been ungrateful and ought to have overlooked the fact that she wasn't pretty), and that when she has deceased the letter is to go to me at once, and from that I draw the conclusion that she has deceased and is no more, don't you see?"

"I see," said the mate. "But does she say anything else? She hasn't left you a ship by any chance?"

"Not to say a ship," said Jordan, shaking his head, "but what's as good. It appears that she naturally let on that she owned ships, bein' a woman

and a little inclined to brag, not havin' good looks to fall back on, and it turns out that she was in the tug and lighter line in Hartlepool, and, as I gather, doin' well enough, and makin' money with three good tugs and a number of lighters and barges not named, as well as a coal-yard with a well-established connection, and she has left the whole shoot to me."

"I congratulate you," said Thripp. "Now you are really independent and can go for Gruddle & Company just as you like."

The skipper nodded.

"So I can, Thripp, so I can; but it is a great pleasure to me to think that I told 'em the truth and called 'em hogs before I had had this letter. Thripp, I feel more like a man than I have done since the very painful day that I had my certificate suspended. Now I'll go and tell Cade. He'll be glad to know it."

He turned to leave the bridge, when Thripp sighed.

"I suppose if you do take 'em on to Table Bay we shall all get the dirty kick-out there, sir?" said Thripp in rather a melancholy tone of voice.

The skipper laughed jovially.

"Of course we shall, Thripp, but think of the satisfaction of doin' it! Oh, but I'm a happy man this hour! And if you can guess what I mean to do in addition to takin' them where they by no manner of means want to go, I'll stand you a bottle of their champagne, of which I mean to have some or bust."

"It's all very well for you now, with your tugs and your lighters and a coal-yard," grumbled Thripp, "but what about me and Cade, and our wives?"

The 'old man' stared at his chief officer in the very greatest surprise.

"Why, didn't I say that I wanted you and him to come into the business with me, if you ain't too proud to be the skipper of a tug, and manage lighters and a coal-yard?"

"You never said a word about it," said Thripp with a pleased and happy smile. "But if you mean that, I'm in with you, sir, and anything you like to do with the firm shall have my heartiest support, even if you go so far as to turn 'em for'ard to work."

Jordan looked at him with the intensest surprise.

"How in the name of all that is holy and righteous did you guess it?" he asked with wide-opened eyes. "Thripp, my man, that is my intention, and no mistake about it. But keep it dark, and I will wake up Cade and make him joyful, a thing he very rarely is, for his career not havin' been a success appears to weigh on his mind, and his missis is a tartar, as I judge. Women worship success, and the fact that the poor old girl that has left me these tugs knew that I came to grief, and yet offered to marry me in spite of it, touched me at the time as much as the tugs do now."

In five minutes there were three exceedingly happy officers on board the *Nemesis*. Such a thing had not happened in one of Messrs. Gruddle & Company's boats since there had been such a firm. But now there were four very unhappy partners.

"I can't think why they are tho happy," said Gruddle when the skipper and the mate came down and began their dinner; "but I feel thure it don't mean any good to uth. I never wath in thuch a pothition, and I don't believe it ever happened before

that the owners of a vessel wath in such a one. Oh, what thall we do if he won't go to Gib? "

At his instigation a bottle of champagne was sent over to the captain's table.

"Don't you underthtand, Butterworth," said the senior partner when Butterworth objected, "that we are in a perthition that is, I may say, unparalleled? A captain hath an awful lot of power, and I gather from 'is be'aviour that 'e knowth it. In the office we gave 'im all proper orderth for Capetown, and thaid nothin' about Gibraltar, becauthe you hadn't been fool enough to thuggetht it then. If 'e won't go there we can't make 'im, tho if a little kindæth and a bottle of thampagne will do it, it ith very cheap at the prithe."

"I would like to murder 'im," said Butterworth, but the champagne was sent over to the skipper's table all the same. It was returned quite courteously, or, at anyrate, without any demonstration of hostility, and the partners knew then that war had been declared, and that peace could be obtained at no price, do what they would. They put it all down to the letter that Sloggett had given him, and they attacked Sloggett, who in revenge drank far more wine than he could stand, and went first for one of them and then for another, and finally got up enough steam to swear at the captain. In one minute and fifteen seconds by any good chronometer Mr. Sloggett was in irons, and in a spare berth without anything to furnish it. Captain Jordan was himself again, and not the kind of man to put up with anything from anybody.

When Sloggett was quiet and subdued, the skipper

told them in a few brief but well-chosen words what he and his officers and the whole ship's company thought of them. He told them his opinion of their charity, and of the wages they paid, and of the grub they put on board their vessel. He went on to state in very vivid language what was said of them all the world over, and then paused for a reply, which they did not give him. He asked them what they thought of themselves, and, whatever they thought upon that subject, they did not venture to state it. He asked Thripp if he would like to say anything, and Thripp did make a few remarks about things the captain had omitted. Then Jordan asked them if they would like to hear Mr. Cade on the subject, for if so Mr. Thripp could relieve the second officer for a few minutes. They expressed no anxiety to hear any more counsel for the prosecution, and then Gruddle made a heart-rending appeal for mercy.

"Oh, take uth into Gibraltar, captain, and we will forgive you all, and even raithe your pay to what you think ith the proper figure. Oh, don't take uth to Capetown, for there ithn't food enough, and I thall die of indigethtion."

"There is plenty of food," said Jordan. "Oh, there is heaps of grub such as Mr. Shody sent on board himself, and as a lesson I'm goin' to take you to South Africa, and I hope to the Lord that you will survive it."

Shody shivered; he knew what bad pork was like. Gruddle, as a Jew, was no judge of it. But the beef was even worse than the pork, and the men for'ard were almost in mutiny about it already.

"But food like that is only fit for men who are

doin' 'ard work," said the unlucky Shody. The skipper's eyes flashed and then twinkled.

"Is that so?" he said. "If it is so, there seems to be a remedy."

What the remedy was he declined to state, and the firm declined to believe that it could be the one that occurred to them all with dreadful vividness. Oh no, it could not be that! Captain Jordan left them thinking, and retired into privacy for the remainder of the night. The trouble of wondering what was to happen to them came to an end in the morning, when by some strange chance, if it was a chance, the deck hands came as a deputation to the captain and laid a complaint against the grub. Jordan requested the presence on deck of the partners, and they knew better than to refuse.

"What you have to say about the food will be better said before the owners, my men," said the skipper. "As you know, they happen to be on board."

As he spoke they crawled on deck, looking very unhappy. With them came Sloggett, who had been released from irons. The steward, Smith, who began to see how the land lay, and treated them with far less respect already, told them what the trouble was.

"The men for'ard says the grub is rotten, gents, and they are furious and fightable about it. Oh, they are savage and very 'ostile."

That was distinctly calculated to cheer them up, and they were as cheerful as if they were ordered three dozen at the gangway.

"Oh, here you are, gentlemen," said the skipper cheerfully. For the first time since he had been an



officer all his sympathies were with the men. He was no longer the captain only, he was also a man, and he understood their point of view. "I thought it best that you should hear the men's complaints about the food. Now then, my men, what have you to say?"

The spokesman of the crew stood in front of the rest, and after some half-audible encouragement from his fellows he burst into speech.

"The grub is 'orrid, sir. Oh, it is the 'orriddest that we was ever in company with. The pork stinks raw or boiled, and the beef fair pawls the teeth of the 'ole crowd. The biscuit is full of worms, and what isn't is as 'ard as flint. The butter makes us sick, sir. And not to make a song about it, but to cut it short, we are bein' starved."

"I'm sorry to hear it," said the captain. "But I am not responsible for the food, men, and when we get to Capetown I'll do my best to see that better stores are put on board. For the stores that you speak of Mr. Shody is responsible."

"If they are bad I 'ave been imposed on," said Shody; but the men made audible and disrespectful remarks which the captain suppressed at once.

"That will do. Go for'ard and I'll see what can be done."

There was only one thing that could be done, and he did it there and then. He had all the provisions that the partners had brought aboard divided among the men for'ard. He sternly refused Thripp's suggestion that the afterguard should share the plunder. Even more, the remaining bottles of champagne went the same way, and for the first

time in their lives the deck-hands and stokers had a real glass of wine that had cost someone ninety shillings a dozen. The firm stood by in mute misery.

"That's the beginnin'," said the skipper sternly, and not one of them had the pluck to ask him what he meant. Gruddle went in tears to Thripp and asked him.

"You're the worst of the lot, you are," said the independent mate; "and I decline to tell you. But I've no objection to throw out a dark 'int that this boat is undermanned all round both on deck and in the stokehold. Does the thought that that gives rise to in your mind make you curl up? Oh, Gruddle, all this is real jam to us, and we mean to scoff it to the very last spoonful. It will do us good!"

Gruddle grasped him by the sleeve.

"Oh, Mr. Thripp, if you'll 'elp uth out of 'ith 'andth we'll make you the captain and give you anythin' you like to athk for in reathon."

"Would it run to a thousand pounds, do you think?" asked the mate.

Gruddle groaned horribly, but said that he thought it might run so far.

"Then let me tell you," said Thripp, "that Jordan is an old pal of mine, and I wouldn't go back on him for ten thousand, or even more. And over and above that, my son, I wouldn't lose the sight of you trimmin' coal in a bunker for the worth of the firm."

He left Gruddle planted to the deck, a wretched sight for the gods, and promptly told Jordan of

the offer that had been made to him. Jordan nodded.

"I ain't surprised," said Jordan. "But, after all, Gruddle is by no means the worst of the gang, and I won't send him down into the stokehold. I mean to keep that for Shody. And I want you to understand that I ain't doin' this out of revenge, but out of a sense of public duty."

He quite believed it, and Thripp saw that he did.

"It's all hunky so far as I'm concerned," said Thripp; "and I hope that you will put Butterworth in Cade's watch and Sloggett in mine."

That was exactly what the skipper had decided on, and he was much surprised to see that Thripp had fathomed his mind.

"To-morrow by noon we shall just about be abreast of Gib, and a long way to the west of it," said Jordan. "I'll give 'em liberty till then, and when I send 'em for'ard I will tell 'em how near Gib is. It will serve them right. I will do it without visibly triumphing over them, Thripp, for I don't believe in treadin' on those who are down."

"No more do I, sir," said the mate; "not unless they thoroughly deserve it."

He left the captain pondering over the situation, and presently imparted to Butterworth the fate in store for him. As Butterworth had nothing whatever to say he went on to the bridge and told Cade of the joy to come. Cade was very magnanimous.

"I'll treat him no worse than any of the others," said Cade with a smile, "no worse."

"That's good of you," said Thripp.

"Not a bit worse," said Cade again. "They are

a holy lot of ruffians in the starboard watch, as you know, and I'll give them all socks if they don't look out. I tell you, sir, that I'm about sorry for Butterworth in that gang. Almost, but not quite."

He had a habit of repeating his words, of chewing the cud of them, and Thripp heard him once more mumble to himself that he was almost sorry, "but not quite." The mate knew that the one who would be quite sorry was Butterworth. He also had suspicions that Mr. Sloggett as a deck hand under his own supervision was likely to learn many things of which he was at present ignorant. He went to the engine-room and saw the chief engineer. To him he revealed the interesting fact that Shody was to be made an extra hand on the engine-room staff. Old Maclehose grinned like a monkey at the sight of a nut.

"Weel, weel, and do you say so?" asked Mac. "That is most encouragin', and it's more than whusky to me. He's the marf that is responsible for all the stores, is he not, Thripp?"

Thripp said that he was.

"My boys will kill him, I shouldna wonder," said Mac. "But if they should, I'm hopin' it will be an accident, Thripp."

He wiped his hands with a lump of waste, and thereby signified that he wiped his hands of Shody's untimely decease.

"The oil is bad," said Mac. "I'm of a solid opinion that Shody won't be so oily after we are through the tropics as he is the noo."

He said no more. He was a man of few words.

Thripp knew he could be trusted for deeds. He went on deck and was almost sorry for Shody. The partners were quite sorry for themselves, and felt as helpless as flies in the web of a spider. They ceased to struggle, and when the usual grub of the *Nemesis* was served to them by an insolent steward, who cared no longer for their authority, they sat and did not eat it and said nothing.

The end came at noon next day, when they were all on deck in fine weather, with Gibraltar far away on the port beam. Old Mac came on deck and complained to the skipper that he was short-handed in the stokehold. Cade spoke up with a pleasant grin.

"You know, Mr. Maclehose, that we can't spare you anyone from the deck. We're short ourselves, are we not, Mr. Thripp?"

"Two short at least," said Thripp, who also smiled as if he were pleased with the fact.

"I'll find you help," said Jordan, who was the only one who did not smile. He turned to the partners, who were clustered together in a sullen and disconsolate group.

"Do you hear, gentlemen, that the chief engineer is short of the hands he should have? I think I told you so in the office, and if I remember rightly, Mr. Shody said I would have to do on what the firm thought enough."

Shody turned as white as new waste, and then grew the colour of waste that has been used. The others fidgeted uneasily, but no one said anything.

"Under the circumstances I have concluded to give you the assistance of Mr. Shody," said the skipper.

"I won't go," roared Shody. "You can't make me. It is a crime, and I protest. Oh, it is scandalous."

"You *will* go," said Jordan, "and I'll see that you do. I'm goin' to teach you all something, I can assure you. And if you don't follow Mr. Maclehose at once, I'll have the stokers up to carry you down."

Gruddle implored the skipper to be merciful, and Jordan said that he would be.

"You are the oldest of the lot, Gruddle, and I have decided that I can best avail myself of your services by askin' you to assist the steward. The duties will not be heavy, and all you are asked is to be polite and willin'. You can now commence. If you stand there and argue I will put you into the stokehold along with Mr. Shody."

Gruddle did not attempt to argue. He was much too afraid that the captain would keep his word. He crawled down below and went to Smith, who set him to work on the light and easy task of cleaning out the captain's berth. While he was at it he heard loud yells from the main-deck, and was told by the steward that four stokers were carrying his partner Shody down below. Over what happened there a decent veil may be drawn. Old Maclehose and the engine-room complement had very little trouble with him, and taught him a very great deal in a very short time. Sloggett, whose spirit had been taken out of him by being put in irons, went into the mate's watch without a single kick; and though Butterworth began to say something, what he was about to tell them never got farther than his lips. Cade caught him by the neck, and running him for'ard discharged him

at the door of the fo'c'sle, and recommended him to the tender mercies of the watch below.

"There, that is done now," said Jordan. "I feel once more as if I was captain of my own ship, and as if I had performed a public duty."

"We may get into trouble, you know," said Thripp.

"Not at all," said the skipper. "They will never dare say a word about it, and when we anchor in Table Bay we'll lock them up, and skip ashore and start for England under other names right off. Timms of the *Singhalese* will be about sailin' the very day we should get there, and he'll be only too pleased to hear the yarn and give us a passage. In two months we'll be runnin' the tug and lighter business, Thripp, and Cade can run the coal-yard."

He smoked a happy pipe.





THE CAPTAIN OF THE  
*ULLSWATER*



## THE CAPTAIN OF THE *ULLSWATER*

There were enemies of Captain Amos Brown who said that he was a liar. He certainly had a vivid imagination, or a memory for a more romantic career than falls to the lot of most at sea or ashore.

"By the time we make Callao, Mr. Wardle," said the skipper to his new mate, as they lay in Prince's Dock, Liverpool, "I expect to be able to tell you something of my life, which has been a very remarkable one."

"You don't say so, sir," said Mr. Wardle, who, as it happened, had heard nothing about the skipper, and was innocently prepared to swallow quite a deal. "You don't say so, sir."

"I do say so," replied the skipper. "It has been a most remarkable career from first to last. Wonders happen to me, Mr. Wardle, so that when I am at sea I just know that something will occur that is strange. I have a collection of binoculars, with inscriptions on them for saving lives at sea, that would surprise you. They have been given me by almost every Government of any importance under the sun."

"That must be very gratifyin', sir," said the mate.

"It gets monotonous," said the skipper with a yawn. "At times I wish foreign Governments had more imagination. They never seem to think two

pairs of glasses enough for any man. And the silver-mounted sextants I possess are difficult to stow away in my house. If you don't mind the inscription to me on it, I'll give you a sextant presented to me by France, Mr. Wardle, if I can remember to bring it with me from home next time."

Mr. Wardle said he should be delighted to own it, and said, further, that the inscription would naturally give it an added interest. At this the skipper yawned again, and said that he was tired of inscriptions.

"The next lot I pick up I'll request not to give my name," he said. "My wife, Mr. Wardle, gets tired of keeping a servant specially 'to polish 'to Captain Brown,' with a lot of complimentary jaw to follow that makes her tired. She knows what I am, Mr. Wardle, and doesn't require to be reminded of it by falling over a gold-mounted sextant every time she turns round. A woman even of a greedy mind can easily get palled with sextants, and a woman sees no particular use in them when they take up room that she wants to devote to heirlooms in her family. Before we get to Callao I'll tell you all about my wife, and how I came to marry her. It is a romantic story. She belongs to a noble family. She is the most beautiful woman that you ever set eyes on. I'll tell you all about it before we get to Callao. I've always been a very attractive man to the other sex, Mr. Wardle. She's rather jealous, too, though she belongs to a noble family. I understand in noble families it isn't good taste to be jealous, but she is. However, I must write to her now, or I shall have a letter from her at Callao that would surprise you, if by that time I know you well enough to show it to

you. And now, what were you saying about those three cases marked P. D., and consigned to Manuel Garcia? "

Mr. Wardle told him what he had been saying about the cases marked P. D., and consigned to Manuel Garcia, and it was settled what was to be done with them. The skipper said that he wished they were full of his binoculars and diamond-mounted sextants, and also his gold watches with fulsome inscriptions on them, and that they were consigned to Davy Jones.

"And this is a letter for you, sir," said the mate. The skipper opened it.

"From my wife," he said, and then he swore.

"Another pair of binoculars from the Swedish Government," he groaned. "I shall write and say that I would rather have a suit of clothes, and that if there must be an inscription on them will they put it where it can't be seen. The German Government once did that for me, but they put the inscription in good English on the collar, and I found it very inconvenient, for strangers would come and breathe in my neck while they read it."

Mr. Wardle went away to ask the second mate what he thought of the skipper. He sighed, and the second mate laughed. The second mate was an unbelieving dog and a merry one. When it came six o'clock they had a wash, and put on clean clothes, and went up town together, and had a friendly drink at a well-known public-house which was a great resort for mates and second mates, though a skipper rarely put his nose inside it.

"I wonder what kind of a chap the skipper is, after

all," said Humphries, the second mate. "It seems to me, sir, that he is a holy terror of a liar, and no mistake."

"Oh, I shouldn't like to say that," replied Wardle. "I do, however, think he exaggerates and puts it on a bit thick. That isn't bein' a liar. I dare say he has saved life at sea. He wouldn't have offered me a silver-mounted sextant if he hadn't several."

"I shall believe you will get it when I see you with it," said Jack Humphries. "In my opinion, Captain Amos Brown is a first-class liar."

Perhaps he spoke a little too loudly for a public place, though that public place was a billiard-room with four second mates playing a four-handed game, and making as much row over it as if they were picking up the bunt of the foresail in a gale of wind. He was overheard by the only 'old man' in the room.

"Did I hear you mention someone called Amos Brown?" asked the old chap sitting next to him.

"I did, sir," said the second mate of the *Ullswater*. "Do you know him?"

"I had an Amos Brown as an apprentice with me when I commanded the *Samuel Plimsoll*," replied the old gentleman, "and he was a very remarkable lad. I think I heard you say that this one was a liar?"

"I did," said Humphries; "though perhaps I shouldn't have done so, as I'm second mate with him now, sir."

The old boy shook his head.

"I won't tell him. But it surely must be the same. The Brown I knew was an awful liar, and I've seen many in my time, gentlemen."

He asked them to drink with him, and they did it willingly. To know the one-time skipper of the old *Samuel Plimsoll* was something worth while, seeing that she had once held the record for a day's run. And if his Brown was theirs it was a chance not to be missed. They took their drinks, and asked him to tell them all about Amos Brown.

"He went overboard in a gale of wind and saved another boy who couldn't swim," said the stranger, "and when we got them back on board, and he could speak, the very first thing he said was that he had seventeen medals from the Royal Humane Society for saving other lives. Does that sound like your man?"

Wardle told him about the binoculars and gold watches and silver-mounted sextants.

"Ah, he's the man," said the old skipper. "Don't you think because he gasses that he hasn't pluck. I'd not be surprised to hear that there is some truth in what he says. I've known one man with four pairs of inscribed binoculars. I dare say Captain Brown has a pair or two. When you see him, tell him that you met Captain Gleeson, who used to command the *Samuel Plimsoll*. And as I'm goin' now, I don't mind owning that I'm the man that has the four pairs of binoculars, gentlemen."

He bade them good night, and Humphries said when he had gone that he was probably as big a liar as the skipper, and had never seen the *Samuel Plimsoll*.

"And as for Brown bein' a hero," added the second mate, "I simply don't believe it. A liar can't be brave."

This was a large and youthful saying, and Wardle,

who was not so young as his subordinate, had his doubts of it.

"I rather think the captain is all right," he said. "I'll ask him to-morrow if he was ever in the *Samuel Plimsoll*."

They were at sea before he got a chance to do so.

"The *Samuel Plimsoll*? well, I should say so!" said the skipper. "And you actually met dear old Gleeson! Why, Mr. Wardle, he was the man that set me on makin' this collection of inscribed articles. Bar myself he is the one man in the whole merchant service with more than he can do with. His native town has a department in its museum especially devoted to what he has given them in that way. His wife refused to give them house-room, and I don't blame her. I saved most of the crew in that dear old hooker at one time or another, went overboard after them in gales of wind. They got to rely on me and grew very careless. I often told them that I wouldn't go after any more, but when you see a poor chap drownin' it is difficult to stay in the dry and let him."

"Ah," said Wardle, "he did speak about your savin' one."

The skipper cast a quick look at him, and then laughed.

"One, indeed," he said contemptuously. "Why, I saved the whole of the mate's watch, the mate included; and on three other occasions I was hauled out of my bunk to go after one of the starboard watch. The only thing I have against old Gleeson is that he was jealous when he saw I was likely to knock his collection of medals and binoculars into a cocked hat.



One, indeed! I've saved seventy men, boys, and women, by goin' in after 'em myself; and somethin' like forty-five crews by skilful seamanship in the face of unparalleled difficulties. I wish I could have a talk with Gleeson."

"He said you were one of the bravest lads he ever met, sir," said Wardle.

The skipper's face softened.

"Did he now? Well, that was nice of him, but I think he might have told you about more than one I saved."

"And he said he had only four pairs of binoculars given him by foreign Governments," added Wardle.

"That is his false modesty," said Captain Brown. "He has an idea that if he told the truth he would not be believed. I don't care who doesn't believe me, Mr. Wardle. If surprisin' things occur to a man why should he not relate them? There's my wife, for instance, one of the nobility, a knight's daughter! I know men that wouldn't mention it for fear of not bein' believed they had married so far above them. She is the most beautiful woman in the three kingdoms, to say nothin' of Europe. I know men that it would seem like braggin' in to say that, but when you get to know me, and know that speakin' the truth isn't out of gear with my natural modesty, you will see why I mention it so freely."

In the course of the next few days Captain Amos Brown mentioned a good many things freely that redounded to the credit of himself and his family, and he did it so nicely, with such an engaging air of innocent and delightful candour, that poor Wardle did not know whether he was shipmates with the most

wonderful man on earth or the most magnificent liar.

"I don't know where I am," he confided in his junior.

"I know where I am," said the graceless second greaser. "I am with a skipper with as much jaw as a sheep's head, and if he said it was raining I should take off my oilskins. He's the biggest braggart and liar I ever met, sir."

"I cannot listen to you sayin' such things," said the mate.

"I beg your pardon for doin' so," replied Humphries, "but the 'old man' is a scorcher, and I can't help seein' it."

To a less prejudiced observer it must have been obvious that there were many fine qualities in Captain Amos Brown. He inspected the cooking of the men's food at intervals, which annoyed the cook and kept him up to his work. When he went his rounds he saw that things were shipshape even in the deck-house. The men for'ard said he might be a notorious liar, as they heard from the steward, but they said he looked like a man and a seaman. Mr. Wardle found him as smart a navigator as he had ever sailed with, and before long was learning mathematics from him.

"No officer need be ashamed of takin' a wrinkle from me, Mr. Wardle," said the skipper, after giving him a lesson in star observations that made the mate sit up. "The Astronomer Royal himself owned to me that I could give him pounds and a beating at a great deal of mathematics. I love it, there is something so fine and free about it. I go sailin' over the sea of the calculus with both sheets aft. He is goin'

to publish some observations of mine about the imperfections of the sextant. They were brought to my notice by my series of silver-mounted ones. I'm inventin' a new one compensated for all different temperatures."

And yet it was quite true that, as far as Wardle went with him, a better and clearer-headed teacher could not be found.

"I shall end in believing every word he says," thought the mate.

And if the mate found him his master in navigation, Humphries found that there wasn't a trick of practical seamanship that wasn't at his finger-ends, from cutting out a jib to a double Matthew Walker on a four-stranded rope, which the skipper could almost do with his eyes shut.

"Everything is all the same to me, Mr. Humphries," said the skipper calmly. "I'm a born pilot, and I can handle every rig as easy as if I'd been born in 'em. I can sail a scow or a schooner, and every kind of sailing-boat from a catamaran to an Arab dhow. And at steam I'm just as good."

Humphries did not believe a word of it, and used to read up old-fashioned seamanship in order to pose him. He never did, and the most out-of-date sea-riddle was to the skipper as easy as slinging a nun-buoy.

"He beats me, I own," said the second mate. "He's the best at all-round sailorizin' that I ever sailed with."

The men for'ard said the same. And the bo'son, who was a very crusty beast from Newcastle, was of opinion that what the 'old man' did not know about ships was not worth knowing.

" I'm goin' to believe 'im hif so be 'e says 'e's bin to the moon," said one cockney. " But for hall we knows the ' old man ' may not show up and shine as 'e does now w'en it's 'ard weather. I was ship-met wiv a skipper once that was wonderful gassy so long's it was topmast stuns'l weather, but when it blew a gale 'e crawled into 'is bunk like a sick stooard, and there 'e stayed till the sun shone."

They soon had a chance of seeing whether the skipper was a fair-weather sailor or not. They had taken an almighty time to get to the south'ard of the Bay of Biscay, for it had been almost as calm as a pond all the way from the Tuscar. Now<sup>f</sup> the barometer began to fall in a steady, business-like way that looked as if it meant work, while a heavy swell came rolling up from the south. The dawn next morning was what ladies would have called beautiful, for it was full of wonderful colour which reached in a strange glory right to the zenith. It afforded no joy, artistic or otherwise, to anyone on board the *Ullswater*, as she rolled in the swell with too little wind to steady her. The watch below came out before breakfast, and looked at the scarlet and gold uneasily. There was a tremendously dark cloud on the horizon, and the high dawn above it was alone a threat of wind. The clouds, that were lighted by the hidden sun, were hard and oily; they had no loose edges, the colour was brilliant but opaque. To anyone who could read the book of the sky the signs were as easy as the south cone. They meant " very heavy weather from the south and west." The skipper looked a deal more happy than he had done before. His eyes were clear and bright; there was a ring in his voice which encouraged

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everybody; he walked the poop rubbing his hands as if he was enjoying himself, as he undoubtedly was. He shortened the *Ullswater* down in good time, but set his three topgallantsails over the reefed topsails, and hung on to them until squalls began to come out of the south which threatened to save all trouble of furling them. By noon the sun was out of sight under a heavy grey pall, and the sea got up rapidly as the wind veered into the west of south. An hour later it was blowing enough to make it hard to hear anyone speak, and he roared the most dreadful and awe-inspiring lies into the ear of his mate.

"This is going to be quite a breeze, Mr. Wardle," he shouted joyously, "but I don't think the weather nowadays is ever what it was when I was young. I've been hove to in the Bay for three weeks at a time. And once we were on our beam ends for a fortnight, and all we ate all that time was one biscuit each. I was so thin at the finish that I had to carry weights in my pocket to keep myself from bein' blown overboard. Oh, this is nothin'! We can hang on to this till the wind is sou'-west, and then maybe we'll heave to."

By the middle of the afternoon watch the *Ullswater* was hanging on to a gale on the port tack with her main-hatch awash, and the crowd for'ard had come to the conclusion that for carrying sail the 'old man' beat any American Scotchman they had ever heard of. When he at last condescended to heave her to, all hands, after wearing her, had a job with the fore and mizzen-topsails that almost knocked the stuffing out of them, as they phrased it. The skipper, however, saw that they had done very well, and told the

steward to serve out grog. As the owners of the *Ullswater* were teetotallers, and about as economical as owners are made, this grog was at the skipper's own expense. When they had got it down, the entire crowd said that they would believe anything the skipper said henceforth. They went for'ard and enjoyed themselves, while the old hooker lay to with a grummet on her wheel, and the great south-wester howled across the Bay. If the main-topsail hadn't been as strong as the grog and the skipper's yarns, it would have been blown out of the bolt-ropes before dark, for the way the wind blew then made the 'old man' own at supper-time that it reminded him of the days of his youth.

"But you never will catch me heavin' to under anythin' so measly as a tarpaulin' in the rigging," said Captain Amos Brown, with his mouth full of beef and his leg round the leg of the table, as the *Ullswater* climbed the rising seas and dived again like a swooping frigate-bird. "I like to have my ship under some kind of command however it blows. One can never tell, Mr. Humphries, when one may need to make sail to save some of our fellow-creatures. As yet neither of you two gentlemen have got as much as the cheapest pair of binoculars out of our own Board of Trade or a foreign Government. With me you'll have your chance to go home to your girl and chuck somethin' of that sort into her lap, and make her cry with joy. I saved my own wife, who is the most beautiful woman in the world, and weighs eleven stone, and has for years, and I got a sextant and a nobleman's daughter at one fell swoop. Oh, I've been a lucky man."

"How did you save your wife, sir?" asked Humphries, who was almost beginning to believe what the skipper said.

"You may well ask, and I can't tell," replied the skipper proudly. "I hardly remember how it was, for when I get excited I do things which kind friends of mine say are heroic, and I can't remember 'em. But so far as I can recall it, I swam near a mile in a sea like this, and took command of a dismasted barque with most of the crew disabled through havin' their left legs broke, a most remarkable fact. There wasn't a sound left leg in the whole crowd except my wife's, and the only thing out of order was that the captain's left leg was broke in two places. I took charge of her, and put splints on their legs, and we were picked up by a tug from Queenstown and towed in there, and the doctors all said I was the neatest hand with splints they had ever seen. And I married my wife then and there with a special licence, and I've never regretted it from that day to this. By Jove, though, doesn't it blow!"

How the "nobleman's" daughter came to be on board the dismasted barque he did not explain, and he shortly afterwards turned in, leaving orders to be called if it blew much harder.

"And when I say much harder, Mr. Wardle, I mean much harder. Please don't disturb me for a potty squall."

As a result of these orders he was not called till the early dawn, when it was blowing nearly hard enough to unship the main capstan. Even then Wardle would not have ventured to rouse him if he had not fancied that he saw some dismasted vessel

far to leeward in the mirk and smother of the gale.

"I think I saw a vessel just now down to loo'ard," screamed the mate as the skipper made a bolt for him under the weather-cloth on the mizzen rigging. "Dismasted I think, sir."

He saw the 'old man's' eye brighten and snap.

"Where did you say?" he roared; and before he could hear they had to wait till a singing squall went over.

"To loo'ard," said the mate again; and the next moment the skipper saw what he looked for.

"Not dismasted, on her beam ends," he shouted. And in a few more minutes, as the grey dawn poured across the waste of howling seas, Wardle saw that the 'old man' was right.

"Poor devils," he said, "it's all over with them."

The word that there was a vessel in difficulties soon brought out the watch on deck, who were taking shelter in the deckhouse. As it was close on four o'clock the watch below soon joined them, and presently Humphries came up on the poop.

"Ah!" said the second mate, "they are done for, poor chaps."

This the skipper heard, and he turned round sharply and roared, "What, with me here? Oh, not much!"

He turned to Wardle.

"Here's your chance for a pair of inscribed binoculars," he said. "I believe she's French, and the French Government have generous minds in the way of fittings and inscriptions, Mr. Wardle."

"But in this sea, sir?" stammered the mate.



"Why, a boat couldn't live in it for a second, even if we launched one safe, sir."

"I've launched boats in seas to which this was a mere calm," said the skipper ardently. "And if I can't get you or Humphries to go I shall go myself."

"You don't mean it, sir," said the mate; and then the skipper swore many powerful oaths that he did mean it.

"In the meantime we're drifting down to her," said Captain Brown, "though she is light and high out of the water and we are as deep as we can be."

It soon got all over the ship that the 'old man' meant to attempt a rescue of those in distress, and there was a furious argument for'ard as to whether it could be done, and whether any captain was justified in asking his crew to man a boat in such a sea. The unanimous opinion of all the older men was that it couldn't be done. The equally unanimous opinion of all the younger ones was that if the skipper said it could be done he would go in the first boat himself rather than be beaten.

"Well, it will be a case for volunteers," said one old fo'c'sle man, "and when I volunteer to drown my wife's husband I'll let all you chaps know."

And that was very much the opinion of Wardle, who was a married man too. As for Humphries, he was naturally reckless, and was now ready to do almost anything the skipper asked.

"He may be a liar," said the second mate, "but I think he's all right, and I like him."

Now it was broad daylight, and the vessel was within a mile of them. Sometimes she was quite

hidden, and sometimes she was flung up high on the crest of a wave. Heavy green seas broke over her as she lay with her starboard yardarms dipping. She had been running under a heavy press of canvas when she broached to and went over on her beam ends, for even yet the sheets of the upper main-topsail were out to the lower yardarm, and though the starboard half of the sail had blown out of the bolt ropes the upper or port yardarm still was sound and as tight as a drum with the wind.

"If she hasn't sunk yet she'll swim a while longer," said the skipper of the *Ullswater*, as the day grew lighter and lighter still. "Show the British ensign, Mr. Humphries, and cheer them up if they're alive. I wish I could tell them that I am here. I'll bet they know me. I'm famous with the French from Dunkirk to Toulon. At Marseilles they call me Mounseer Binoculaire, and stand in rows to see me pass."

The lies that he told now no one had any ears for. Wardle owned afterwards that he was afraid that the 'old man' would ask him to go in command of a boat, and, like the old fo'c'sle man, he was thinking a good deal of his wife's husband. But all the while Captain Amos Brown was telling whackers that would have done credit to Baron Munchausen, he was really thinking of how he was to save those whose passage to a port not named in any bills of lading looked almost certain. By this time the foreigner was not far to leeward of them.

"No one could blame us if we let 'em go," shrieked the 'old man' in his mate's ear as the wind lulled for one brief moment. "But I never think of what other men would do, Mr. Wardle. I

remember once in a cyclone in the Formosa Channel——”

What dreadful deed of inspired heroism he had performed in a cyclone in the Formosa Channel Wardle never knew, for the wind cut the words from the skipper's lips and sent them in a howling shower of spray far to loo'ard. But his last words became audible.

“I was insensible for the best part of a month after it,” screamed Amos Brown. “The usual . . . silver-mounted . . . sickened . . . wife as I said.”

Then he caught the mate by the arm.

“We'll stand by 'em, Mr. Wardle. If I get another sextant, as I suspect, I must put up with it. Get the lifeboat ready, Mr. Wardle, and get all the empty small casks and oil-drums that you can and lash them under the thwarts fore and aft. Make her so that she can't sink and I'll go in her myself.”

“That's my job, sir,” said Wardle, for he forgot all about his wife's husband at that moment.

“I know it,” said the skipper, “but with your permission I'll take it on myself, as I've had so much experience in this sort of thing and you've had none. And I tell you you'll have to handle the *Ullswater* so as to pick us up as we go to loo'ard, and it will be a job for a seaman and no fatal error.”

The mate swore softly and went away and did as he was told. The men hung back a little when he told them to get the boat ready for launching, though they followed him when they saw him begin to cast off the gear by which she was made fast. But the old fo'c'sle man had something to say.

"The captain ain't goin' to put a boat over the side in a sea like this, is he, sir?"

Wardle snorted.

"You had better ask him," he replied savagely, and then there was no more talk. He went back to the poop and reported that the boat was ready. He also reported that the men were very unlikely to volunteer.

"They'll volunteer fast enough when they know I'm goin' to ask nothin' of them that I don't ask of myself," said the captain. "I really think the wind is takin' off a little, Mr. Wardle."

Perhaps it was, but if so the sea was a trifle worse. And it seemed to the skipper and the two mates that the French vessel was lower in the water than she had been. She was getting a pounding that nothing built by human hands could stand for long.

"There's not much time to lose," said the skipper.

Captain Amos Brown apparently knew his business, and knew it, as far as boats were concerned, in a way to make half the merchant skippers at sea blush for their ignorance of one of the finest points of seamanship. The skipper had the crew aft under the break of the poop, and came down to them himself. They huddled in the space between the two poop-ladders and looked very uneasy.

"Do any of you volunteer to try and save those poor fellows to loo'ard of us?" asked the "old man." And no one said a word. They looked at the sea and at each other with shifty eyes, but not at him.

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"Why, sir, 'tis our opinion that no boat can't live in this sea," said the bo'son.

"I think it can," said the captain, "and I'm goin' to try. Do any of you volunteer to come with your captain? I ask no man to do what I won't do myself."

There was something very fine about the liar of the *Ullswater* as he spoke, and everyone knew that now at least he was telling no lies.

"I'm wiv you, sir," said a young cockney, who was the foulest mouthed young ruffian in the ship, and had been talked to very severely by his mates on that very point. It is not good form for a youngster to use worse language than his elders at sea. Some of the others looked at him angrily, as if they felt that they had to go now. A red-headed Irishman followed the cockney, just as he had followed him into horrid dens down by Tiger Bay.

"I'm with ye, too, sorr," said Mike.

"I'm only askin' for six," said the skipper. Then the old fo'c'sle man, who had been so anxious about his wife's husband, hooked a black quid out of his black teeth and threw it overboard.

"I'll come, sir."

But now all the other young men spoke together. The skipper had his choice, and he took the unmarried ones.

He gave his orders to the mate without a touch of braggadocio.

"We'll run her off before the wind, Mr. Wardle, and then quarter the sea and lower away on the lee quarter. See that there is a man on the weather quarter with oil, so as to give us all the smooth

you can. When we are safe afloat give us your lee to work in all you can, and hang her up in the wind to windward of the wreck all you know. While you are there don't spare oil; let it come down to her and us. It is possible that we may not be able to get a line to the wreck, but we'll go under her stern and try. With all her yards and gear in the sea it won't be possible to get right in her lee, so we may have to call to them to jump. My reckonin' is that we may pick up some that way before we get too far to loo'ard. When we get down close to her, fire the signal-gun to rouse them up to try and help us. When you see us well to loo'ard of the wreck, put your helm up, and run down and give us your lee again. If we miss her and have to try again, we must beat to windward once more. But that's anticipatin', ain't it? You can put your helm up now, Mr. Wardle. Shake hands."

And they shook hands. Then the skipper and his men took to the boat, which was ready to lower in patent gear, with Humphries in charge of it, and the *Ullswater* went off before the wind. Then at a nod from the captain she came up a little, till she quartered the sea with very little way on her.

"Now, Mr. Humphries," said the skipper. In ten seconds they hit the water fair and the hooks disengaged. The oil that was being poured over on the weather quarter helped them for a moment, and even when they got beyond its immediate influence they kept some of the lee of the ship. They drifted down upon the wreck, and rode the seas by pulling ahead or giving her sternway till they were within half a cable's length of the doomed vessel. At that

moment they fired the signal-gun on board the *Ullswater*, and they saw some of the poor chaps to loo'ard of them show their heads above the rail. Then the full sweep of the gale struck them. But the liar of the *Ullswater*, who had saved more crews in worse circumstances than he could count, actually whistled as he sat in the stern-sheets with a steering oar in his hands.

To handle a boat in a heavy sea, with the wind blowing a real gale, is a thing that mighty few deepwater seamen are good at. But the skipper of the *Ullswater* knew his business even then as if he had been a Deal puntman, a North Sea trawler, or a Grand Bank fisherman all his life. The boat in which he made his desperate and humane venture was double-ended like a whale-boat, and she rode the seas for the most part like a cork. In such a situation the great thing is to avoid a sea breaking inboard, and sometimes they pulled ahead, and sometimes backed astern, so that when a heavy sea did break it did so to windward or to loo'ard of them. And yet a hundred times in the dreadful full minutes that it took them to get down to the wreck there were moments when those in the boat and those in the *Ullswater* thought that it was all over with them. Once a sea that no one could have avoided broke over them, and it was desperate work to bale her out. And the roar of the wind deafened them; the seas raced and hissed; they pulled or backed water with their teeth clenched. Some of them thought of nothing; others were sorry they had volunteered, and looked at the captain furiously while he whistled through his clenched teeth. One cockney swore at

him horribly in a thin piping scream, and called him horrid names. For this is the strange nature of man. But he pulled as well as the others, and the skipper smiled at him as his blasphemies cut the wind. For the skipper saw a head over the rail of the wreck, and he knew that there was work to be done and that he was doing it, and that the brave fool that cursed him was a man and was doing his best. The words he spoke were such as come out of a desperate mind, and out of a man that can do things. They towed an oil-bag to windward, but there was no oil to calm the movements of the soul at such a time.

"Oh, damn you, pull!" said Amos Brown. He ceased to whistle, and cursed with a sudden and tremendous frenzy that was appalling. The cursing cockney looked up at him with open mouth.

By the 'old man's' side in the stern-sheets there was a coil of rope attached to a little grapnel. If the men still alive on board the French barque were capable of motion they might be able to make a rope fast, but after hours of such a trial, while they were lashed under the weather bulwarks, it was possible that they were almost numb and helpless. Now the boat came sweeping down by the stern of the barque; they saw her smashed rudder beating to and fro, and heard the battering-ram of the south-west seas strike on her weather side.

"Back water!" roared the skipper, for astern of them a big sea roared and began to lift a dreadful lip. They held the boat, and the 'old man' kept it straight on the roaring crest, and at that moment they were lifted high, and saw beyond the hull of the barque the white waste of driven seas. Then



they went down, down, down; and when they were flung up again the skipper screamed to those on board, and as he screamed he threw the grapnel at the gear of the spanker, and as they surged past her stern the hooks caught in the bight of her loosened vang. For all her gear was in a coil and tangle, and the topping-lifts of the gaff had parted. The men backed water hard, and the boat hung half in the lee of the wreck, but dangerously near the wreck of the mizzen-topmast, which had gone at the cap and swayed in the swash of the seas. Now they saw the seamen whom they had come to save, and no man of the boat's crew could hereafter agree as to what happened or the order of events. The skipper called to the poor wretches, and one cut himself adrift and slid down the sloping deck and struck the lower rail with horrible force. They heard him squeal, and then a sea washed him over to them. He was insensible, and that was lucky, for his leg was broken. Then they made out that one of the survivors was the captain, and they saw that he was speaking, though they heard nothing. There were, it seemed, no more than ten of the crew left, for they counted ten with the one man that they had. But it seemed that they moved slow, and the sea was worse than ever. It boiled over the weather-rail and then came over green, and all the men in the boat yelled filthy oaths at the poor numb wretches, and called them horrible names. The Irishman prayed aloud to heaven and to all the saints and to the Virgin, and then cursed so awfully that the others fell into silence.

"Jump, jump!" screamed the skipper, and another man slid down the deck and came overboard for them.

He went under and got his head cut open on a swaying block, and knew nothing of it till he was dragged on board. Then he wiped the blood from his eyes and fell to weeping, whereon the swearing cockney, who had been oddly silent since his eyes had met the skipper's, cuffed him hard on the side of the head, and said, "'Old your bloody row, you bleedin' 'owler!'" And then three of his mates laughed as they watched their boat and fended it off the wreck of the mizzen-mast with deadly and preoccupied energy. The cockney took out a foul handkerchief and dabbed it on the bleeding man's head, and then threw the rag at him with an oath, saying that a little blood was nothing, and that he was a blasted Dago, and, further, he'd feel sorry for him when he was on board the *Ullswater*. Then another man jumped and was swept under and past them, and just as he was going the skipper reached over and, grabbing him by the hair, got him on board in a state of unconsciousness. Then three of the poor fellows jumped at once, two being saved and the third never showing above the water again.

"As well now as wiv the rest of hus," said the cockney, who had given the Dago his "wipe," and he snivelled a little. "Hif I gets hout of this I'm for stayin' in Rovver've all the rest of my life."

Then they got another, and there were only the French skipper and one more man left. It was probably his mate, but he had a broken arm and moved slow. The French captain got a rope round him and slid him down to loo'ard. But when he was halfway down the old skipper (he was at any rate white-haired) lost his own hold, and came down into

the swash of the lee scuppers with a run. He fell overboard, and the Irishman got him by the collar. He was lugged on board with difficulty, and lay down on the bottom boards absolutely done for. The other man didn't show up, and the men said that he must be dead. They began talking all at once, and the skipper, who was now up at the bows of the boat, turned suddenly and cuffed the Irishman hard, whereupon Mike drew his sheath-knife, saying in a squeal, "You swine, I'll kill you!" But the bo'son struck him with the loom of his oar under the jaw, and nearly broke it. He snatched his knife from him and threw it overboard.

Now they saw the *Ullswater* right to windward of the sinking barque, and some oil that they poured into the sea came down to them, so that the hiss of the sea was so much less that it seemed as if silence fell on them. They heard the Irishman say with difficulty as he held his jaw :

"All right, my puggy, I'll have your blood."

He had lost his oar, and the other men were wild with him. What they might have said no one knows, but the skipper turned to them, saying that he would go on board after the last man. They all said at once that he shouldn't. They gave him orders not to do it, and their eyes were wild and fierce, for they were strained and tired, and fear got hold of them, making them feel chilly in the fierce wind. They clung to the captain in their minds. If he did not come back they would never be saved, for now the boat was heavily laden. They opened their mouths and said: "Oh please, sir," and then he jumped overboard and went hand over hand along the grapnel

line and the tangle of the vangs. They groaned, and the Irishman wagged his head savagely, though no one knew what he meant, least of all himself. They saw the 'old man' clamber on board as a big sea broke over her, and they lost sight of him in the smother of it. They sat in the heaving boat as if they were turned into stone, and then the Irishman saw something in the sea and grabbed for it. He hauled hard, and they cried out that the skipper mustn't try it again. But as the drowning man came to the surface they saw that it was not the skipper after all, but the French mate, and they said: "Oh, hell!" being of half a mind to let him go. But the bo'son screamed out something, and they hung on to a dead man's legs, for to the dead man's hands the skipper was clinging. They got him on board not quite insensible, and the Irishman fell to weeping over him.

"Oh, it's the brave bhoys you are," he said; and then the skipper came to and vomited some water.

"Hold on, what are you doin'?" he asked, as he saw the two cockneys trying to heave the dead man back in the sea. They said that he was dead. The bo'son said that the deader had only half a head, and couldn't be alive in that condition. So they let the body go, and the skipper woke right up and was a man again. They hauled up to the grapnel or near it, for they were strained enough to do foolish things. Then they saw it was silly and cut the line. They drifted to loo'ard fast, and got out into the full force of the gale, which howled horribly. They saw the *Ullswater* lying to under her sturdy old maintopsail, and as soon as they saw her they were seen

by the second mate, who was up aloft with his coat half torn off him. To get her off before the wind quick they showed the head of the foretopmast-stay-sail, which was promptly blown out of the bolt ropes with a report they heard in the boat like the dull sound of a far-off gun. She squared away and came to the nor'-east, and presently was to windward of them, and in her lee they felt very warm and almost safe, though they went up to the sky like a lark and then down as if into a grave. And then they saw their shipmates' faces, and the skipper laughed oddly. The strain had told on him, as it had on all of them, not least perhaps on some of those who had not faced the greater risks. And it seemed to the skipper that there was something very absurd in Wardle's whiskers as the wind caught them and wrapped them in a kind of hairy smear across one weather-beaten cheek. All those in the boat were now quite calm; the excitement was on board the *Ullswater*, and when the gale let them catch a word of what the mate said, as he stood on the rail with his arm about a backstay, they caught the quality of strain. -

"Ould Wardle is as fidgety as a fool," said Mike the Irishman, as he still held on to his jaw. "He'll be givin' someone the uncivil word for knockin' the oar out o' me hand."

He sat with one hand to his face, with the other, as he had turned round, he helped the bo'son.

"What about your pullin' your knife on the captain?" asked the bo'son.

Then Micky shook his head.

"Did I now? And he struck me, and he's a

brave lad," he said simply. But the hook of the davit tackle dangled overhead as they were flung skyward on a sea. There were davit ropes fitted, and one slapped the Irishman across the face.

"It's in the wars I am," he said; and then there was a wind flurry that bore the *L'llswater* almost over on them. The way was nearly off her, yet in another minute she would be right down on them.

"Now!" screamed the skipper, and they hooked on and were hauled out and up.

"Holy mother," said Mike, "and I'm not drowned this trip!"

The boat was hauled on board, and when the skipper's foot touched the deck he reeled. Humphries caught him.

"Oh, steady, sir," said Humphries, as Mike came up to them.

The captain stared at him, for he did not remember striking him.

"It's the brrave man you are," said Mike simply; "and you're the first man that I've tuk a blow from since I was the length of my arm. Oh, bhoys, it's the brrave man the skipper is."

The second mate pushed him away, and he went like a child and lent a hand to help the poor "divils of Dagoes," as he called those who had been saved. The mate came and shook hands with the captain. The tears ran down Wardle's hairy face, and he could not speak.

"I shall have another pair of binoculars over this," said Captain Amos Brown with quivering lips.

"You are a hero," bawled the mate as the wind

roared again in a blinding squall with rain in it. The skipper flushed.

"Oh, it's nothin', this," he said. "Now in the Bay of Bengal——"

The wind took that story to loo'ard, and no one heard it. But they heard him wind up with "gold-mounted binoculars."

A year later he got a pair from the great French Republic. They were the first he ever got.





**JACK-ALL-ALONE**



## JACK-ALL-ALONE

As it happened, I was the only passenger in the steamship *Hindoo*, and I found little entertainment in the company of her officers. The skipper was said never to open his mouth except upon Sundays, when he preached furiously to the assembled crowd and promised them hell as a reward for their labours on the deep sea. He was a religious maniac, much in favour with the owners because he combined religion with honesty and an unequalled degree of meanness about stores. He was little, and of a pallor that no sun could touch. He carried a hymn-book in his breast-pocket, and loose snuff in a side one. I found no comfort in him, and even less in the two mates. They were much married men with large families, and were subdued by the fear of losing their billets. They hung together and abused the skipper, and took no interest in the sea or any of its works. They pined for inland farms, where they would have been pelicans in a dry desert. I turned to the crew, and by dint of giving them tobacco and occasional nips of liquor overcame their distrust and shyness. For even though I had once been a seaman, that time was so far away that I had lost all look of it. And even when they knew it, they took it for granted I had been an officer, which put me out of their

range. It was only my loneliness and my low cunning with rare whisky that made me free of their company, and at last loosened their tongues. I often sat with them in the dog-watches and set them yarning when I could by yarning myself. But only one story that I heard remains in my memory. It remains, not so much by its strangeness as by the strange way it was told, and the difficulty I had in getting it told at all. It was one of the younger seamen that put me on the track of the man who had it to tell.

"Why don't you try old Silent for a yarn, sir?" he said one day, when I was on the fo'c'slehead with him on the look-out; "he that says nought could say a lot. He might open up with you. With us he's as close as a water-tight compartment. But they do say in this vessel that he came out of one ship the honly survivor."

What can one do on board a lonely steamer where there is no one to talk to and nothing to read, and there are so many unoccupied hours in front of one? The days were grey, the sea was grey, and as flat as last year's news. I set out yarn-hunting, and went for old Silent as they called him. I went for him warily. To ask him a question would be to cheat oneself of any expectation. I ceased to attempt to talk with him. But having fallen into his mood, I added to the compliment by giving him more tobacco on the quiet than I gave anyone else. I called him into my deck cabin, and gave him a drink of whisky without a word. He drank it without a word, wiped his lips, scraped a sort of bow, and withdrew.

He was a melancholy man, downcast, ragged-bearded, with a glazed, yellow skin on his face, and shining scales upon the backs of his hands. His teeth were black with tobacco-chewing. His ears had been pierced for earrings, though he wore none. His eyes were deep-set, black; his mouth was a mere slit, his ears large and outstanding, like a couple of stunsails. He was obviously strong even yet. But he assuredly bore the marks of certain disastrous hours upon him, and his nerves betrayed him at times. I saw his hand shake when he lifted the drink to his lips.

"You've been through something, my friend," I said to myself. "I wonder what it is. It's not only 'D. T.'"

Life to my mind is a series of fights, and one is mostly knocked out. I could see that old Silent had been knocked out. Well, so had I, many a time, and his gloomy face appealed to me as a man of like disasters to myself. I saw (ay, and see) so many who seem to have no kind of insight into things. They are mere children, and one pities them as one does young recruits going to war. I've known men to die without suspecting it. For the most part, men live without suspecting any of the dangers, traps, pitfalls, and disasters that surround them. There was an uneasy alertness at times in this old seaman's eye which suggested that he knew Death was close at hand. I watched him keenly enough, for I had a great curiosity about him. What was the story of this poor inhabitant of this strange globe? What had he in common with those who see through illusion, who can pierce the hollow earth and see the

fires, who can foretell storms, who can scent immediate and irremediable death?

This was folly, no doubt. I was in a bad state of mind, and had disaster behind me, and the shadow of it before me. There have been hours in many a man's life when the thought that he could end it was his only comfort. Without being in that state, my frame of mind was not wholly enviable, and I wanted some kind of help that I could not find. What was it that sent me to old Silent, if not the intuition that he had known worse than I?

We talked at last, at midnight, for I had found the clue to his heart in some inscrutable way beyond my knowledge. Perhaps he saw something in me that invited confidence. Oddly enough, strangers have often enough opened their hearts to me, when I least expected it. There is some deep necessity of confession in men's hearts, and in speech they compel sympathy—or at least they can plead their own cause.

" 'Tis a black night, sir," said the old man, whose real name was Gilby, " 'tis a black enough night."

He was on the look-out, and it was the first hour after midnight. I climbed up and stood beside him close against the windlass, which looked in the dark like a stiff, distorted corpse covered with merciful canvas. The heavens were low and there was not one star visible. Wind there was none, and the sea was a dulled plate of pale dark steel. What air blew on the fo'c'slehead we made ourselves. The cargo derricks on their platforms held watch with us: they looked diabolical and all alert. Under the straight stem of the *Hindoo* the sea hissed lightly

like water escaping from a cock. The vibration of the engines was muffled for'ard; but it beat like a steady pulse.

"Ay, it's a very dark night," I answered, as I stood alongside him in the very eyes of her.

I glanced up at the mast-head light, and what glow came to me blinded me still more. But the light was a kind of comfort. And so were the side lights. One could believe with the Chinese that a vessel might see with painted eyes on the bow. Neither of us spoke a word for full ten minutes.

"You've been a seaman, sir?" he asked presently.

"Twenty years ago."

I went back twenty years, and was no more than a boy. Now was my "Twenty Years After." My old companions were dead or lost in the years.

"Twenty years you say, sir?"

There was something strange in his voice, an eagerness, a sharp pain.

"Full twenty," I answered, dreaming.

"When I was young it seemed as if a man would forget anything in twenty years, sir."

There were things one couldn't forget. I knew that, and I knew that here was an unforgetful heart of pain. My curiosity seemed most unworthy, and I was ashamed of it. But the old man spoke, and I knew he was not old.

"'Twas this day, sir," he said in a low voice, "and this very night in November—twenty years ago! A dark night enough, and yet a strange light in it. Did you ever play Jack-all-alone at sea, sir? was you ever by yourself at sea? That's the terror.

of the sea, sir. A sticky, wet, clammy terror. For we have mates in ships, even if we don't speak. Have you ever felt the big sea and the sky, sir, spread out and spread over for you alone? "

I had spent one night at sea alone in the English Channel in the fine but foolhardy game of single-handed sailing. He brought it back to me now, and I sat in a little fifteen-foot cutter-rigged open boat in a great and gorgeous calm to the south and east of Dungeness Point. At sunset the wind failed and left me at the will of the tides. For a long hour the golden west was a wonder of fine colour, and the sky overhead a most heavenly pale blue. The low coast towards Romney was a faint dark line, submerged in the sea. Elms ashore looked like massed shipping; a church-tower was dark against the sunset. Dungeness Point glared over me, and I drifted on the last of the north-west curve of the tide into its red sector shining like blood on the lip of the moving water. An infinite and most infinitely deep silence oppressed and purified me. This was the purification of the ancient and immortal tragedy of the sea. I sat in a red flood and the day died. The piety of the great darkness buried the earth. Till midnight came I was alone and was nothing; a mere fleck of foam; I was all things; I was the world itself. Then a great fishing-smack drifted to me. I spoke to a dim shadow in the heavy shadow of great sails that hung motionless. I lost that voice again in the drifting of the tide and in a faint light air. Then at last the dawn broke, and the winking lights of land died down and the day and the land arose, and I was no longer alone.



"I knew it for a night," I said. It is the rarest thing for any seaman to know. In this was his disastrous story. "How did it happen to you? Would it hurt you to tell me, or would it help?"

There was no more unworthy curiosity in me, and that I was purified of it he must have felt. For this was a man who could feel and remember. The great gift of forgetfulness is mostly given to the highest and to the lowest only. I drifted for a moment on my own sea of memory, and when I came back I heard him speaking. Those who have been long silent come some day to an hour of strange and easy speech.

"I and my brothers——"

I heard his voice catch on the word and get over it with a bitter jar, as a vessel might slide over a shoal in uncharted waters. Yet he knew those waters of Marah well.

"We was in a rotten old steamer, sir, them and me. Jack was my elder, and a fine big chap, good as gold, and as brave and strong as a lion; a *real* seaman, such as one don't meet nowadays. ~~He~~ mostly sailed in wind-jammers, but he was one of those that like to see things, and he had a fancy to potter round the Mediterranean once in a way. He'd read a lot at sea one passage in a Green's ship that had a fair pile of books in her for the crowd for'ard, and he'd a fancy to see Italy and Greece. He'd talk by the hour of old Romans, and a strange character that was at Syracuse some time back; I disremember his name, but he was for science and arithmetic; and he knew the name of a score of Roman emperors quite pat; and he said once when

we was at the port of Athens that a hill plain to be seen was the home of the gods in the days before Christianity came to the fore. He was a first-class man at whatever he took to, that he was, and might have been high up if he'd had a chance to be properly eddicated. And Billy, my young brother, was a fine boy of quite another guess sort. He cared for nothing but fun, and he was good-looking, and a rare youngster with his dooks. I've seen him down a Dutchman twice his weight, and do it laughing. He was bright as the day, sir, bright as sunlight, and there we was, the three of us, in this rotten old tramp, built in the year one of steamships, and much the shape and size of a biscuit-tin, and not much to her that was better material. And so we mucked about the Mediterranean looking for cargo, like the sea-tramp she was, and every time it blew a capful of wind we had to turn her nose to it and keep bobbing. For if there was any kind of a sea on the beam, she'd roll so cruel that our hearts was in our mouths. And Billy's joke was always the old sea-joke that she had rolled right over in the night, and done it so quick that no one knew it. But, I own, she put the fear of God into most of us, and some of us got that narvous, we couldn't sit quiet unless there was a flat calm, and her just joggin' on ahead like an old hay-wagon. We went down from Barcelona with some sort of truck to Constant, and there Jack did talk a lot about emperors, and he was pleased as Punch to see things, saying that history grew rank thereabouts; and he would ask the old skipper about things dead and gone thousands of years, so that the old man, never liking to own

he wasn't chock-a-block with knowledge, used to fidget like one o'clock, and get that cross with dodging 'twas a game to hear him. And then we went humping up the Black Sea, and brought out wheat from Ibrail, and we got stuck down at Sulina, and lightered her clear and had a holy time, so that Jack said making history in the wheat trade was no joke. And we came out from Constant for home. But home we never got, sir, and to say the truth, I've never been home since, and never shall go. Do you know the Mediterranean, sir? "

Did I know it? Even as he talked I had been thinking of Crete on our starboard beam at night, and of Etna right ahead at dawn, and the white cities of the Straits, of lava-bound Catania, of old historic Syracuse, of the sickle-shaped harbour of Messina, of high Taormina, and the day breaking in the hollows of the grey Calabrian hills. Then smoking Stromboli, a cinder peak of the seas. And afterwards singing, roaring Naples and atmospheric Capri sunk in sweet blue air. Oh, did I know it?

" Ay, I know it."

" We came up with Sicily, and went in by the Straits to drop some truck or another at Messina, and then out again to the north, and when we were near alongside Volcano, it was looking bad and grey and hard as it does when a levanter threatens. The sea got up, and it was short and steep and hard, sir. And for a while we battered among the islands and Volcano smoking and, I dessay, Stromboli, too, but the smother of the weather was too thick to see it. And I was on the look-out, as I am now, and Jack he was relieved at the wheel as I came up on the

fo'c'slehead. He laughed up at me, and said, ' This top-heavy old hay-wagon will be doin' a roll directly.' And just as he went below, the skipper, who was as afraid of her as he had a right to be, turned her about and put her nose into the wind. There she stayed, uneasy and sawin' with her 'ead like a swell carriage-'orse. And they just went ahead with the old scrap-engines, and stayed so, reckoning to ride the gale out. And she rode it right enough till night, and we three brothers 'ad supper and passed our jokes. And poor Billy was as bright a kid as ever—oh, I can think of things 'e said now.'"

He stopped speaking for a moment and dashed his fist on the rail.

" By God, it's twenty years ago, sir," he said, choking. " And old Volcano's smoking yet, like a giant's pipe in the dark, puff and glow, puff and glow. And that man-drowning tank we was in lies a thousand fathoms deep to the west of Volcano."

He didn't speak for a while, and when he did his voice was calmer.

" Don't think, sir, that I'd ha' complained of the common fortunes of the sea. Men are drowned, they go overboard, silent it may be, or they drop from aloft howling awful, and in the smother of a wreck when the sea's a wild beast, it's the lot of men to go. I've seen fire at sea, sir, and death in many shapes, sudden and slow, killing and fever. But the way my brothers died—why, sir, I held their hands and couldn't save 'em, held their hands and couldn't see their faces. Jack-all-alone, seamen say! I was Jack-all-alone, while they cried out to me!

" You can reckon, sir, that such a craft, such a

rotten, shaky, scrap-heap hooker, such a thing that oughtn't to have been outside a river, wasn't over well found. And those that had the finding of 'er 'ad to make a bit of stealage. 'Alf the skippers and engineers of such takes their lives in their 'ands not for the pay, but for the bit of a make. And yet I'd not think it possible for the engineer to 'ave bin in the oil racket that came out that night. They was short of oil in Constant, and got some aboard from a rotten Levantine Greek with a Harmenian for partner, and it was bad oil enough, to be sure. But the worst was that some o' the drums was a quarter oil and the rest water. And I, being on deck after supper, caught on to what the chief engineer said to our skipper. He came up running, and went on the bridge.

" ' Cap'en, most o' that oil was water, and the oil's that bad the bearin's are overwarm. Can't I stop 'er? '

" ' Stop 'er! ' says the old man. I knew that voice; 'e was that narvous of his old tank. ' Why, man, if we stop 'er, she'll roll over! '

" The seas was 'eavy, my word, considering where we was. She plunged and shook and creaked like a kicked tin can.

" ' I'm edgin' of 'er in under Volcano,' says the skipper. ' I want more steam, not less.'

" ' By God, you can't 'ave it,' said the engineer, as desperate as you like.

" ' Play the 'ose on your blasted bearin's,' pipes the skipper, with a voice like a bo'son's whistle.

" ' I'm playin' it,' says the other.

" ' Then you know what to do,' squeaks the ' old man.'

" And the engineer comes down tearin' 'is very beard. And I was took with a kind of a shiver, which was curious seeing that mostly sailormen never gives a damn what 'appens till the worst opens its mouth for 'em. I went down into the fo'c'sle and looked at Jack fast asleep, and Billy under 'im. There was only four of us for'ard, and they two was the starboard watch. That was the last time I saw more of 'em than their 'ands. I went on deck again, never wakin' 'em. And then I 'eard the engineer on deck again.

" 'I'll 'ave to stop my engines,' he cried, 'or if I don't they'll stop themselves. There's three bear-in's sizzling, and the white metal's running, and the engine-room's full o' steam from the 'ose playin' on 'em.'

" 'You can't stop,' said the skipper. And the wind blew like a blast out of a pipe; it squealed, and she stopped a'most dead.

" 'Give us a quarter of an hour,' says the 'old man,' and he puts the second mate alongside of him. 'Call the 'ands, and rig up a sea-anchor.'

" And that was too late, for there was a crack below, and a man screamed, and the engineer bolted for his hole. But the engines stopped right there, and the nose of 'er paid off, and she lay in the trough of the sea, and rolled once, and rolled twice. And she went over to windward till you'd 'ear everything crack, and then she rolled to loo'ard. Would she ever stop! I see the old man slide away down the bridge, squealin', and the second mate pitched off his feet, and I gave a yell and climbed up on the weather rail, and old Volcano glared red

over us to the nor'ard. And she was crank, and was never meant for the sea, and she 'ad 'eavy useless spars and derricks that overweighted 'er, and her grain was in bulk, and not too much of it. And the wind got hold of her, and she never stopped. I 'eard the old man yell again, and the sea rose up against him, and the sleeping mate was screamin' in his berth with a jammed door. And then I was Jack-all-alone, scramblin' with bleedin' fingers up a rotten wet iron slope, and I stopped when I 'ad 'old of 'er very keel. And then I 'eard an awful rip and a tearing, and a boom under my feet, and I reckoned the 'ole of 'er engines dropped through her deck, and maybe the boilers exploded, for she gave a 'eave on the sea that made me sick, and I 'ung on with my nails, and I found myself cryin' out 'Billy' and 'Jack,' and I was mad that hour. Ay, I was mad, and I beat upon the black and weedy iron of the plates underneath me. I was warm to think I was saved, and I was a coward, and I shook and trembled and nigh slipped off as the old scow wallowed. 'Twas most 'orrible to be 'earin' warm and livin' men speakin' one moment, to be among 'em, and them talkin', and to see the warm light, and to 'ear the thump, thump, of the engines, and the crackin' and creakin' of the old *Red Star*, and then to be all alone, Jack-all-alone, sailing 'and in 'and with death, 'ove up not on an 'alf tide rock as the thing beneath me looked, but a rotten old steamer turned turtle, and like to slip away from me any moment. And as I 'owled to myself, and saw the white water run up and lip at me like open-mouthed sharks, I saw the red

light of Volcano away high up, and the light was like the wink of a light'ouse blinded in a fog. And the sight of the land, or where the land was, maddened me, and I cried like a child with weakness. 'Twas most 'orrible, sir, and weakness took me, so that I slipped and nigh lost 'old of the keel. But I climbed up again desperate, and findin' a bolt worked out, I 'itched my belt to it and 'ung on.

" And then I 'eard a sound that made my 'eart stop beatin'. 'Twas as if someone was usin' an 'ammer on iron, and I knew that there^was someone alive inside of the *Red Star*, cooped up under 'er keel and shut into a tomb. And I cried, ' You can't get out, you can't get out, mates!' so that my voice made me afraid. For 'twas a scream and like no voice I'd ever 'eard. But I scrambled along the keel and came to where the 'ammerin' was, and then I knew that they was Jack or Billy, or maybe both, and I beat with my fists on the plates, and I bled, but didn't know it, and I prayed all the plates was as rotten as we believed. But they wasn't that bad, and they was iron and iron bolted, and I'd nought but a knife, and what they was workin' with inside I couldn't tell. And they was in foul 'eavy air, and in the blackest dark. I prayed and I cursed, and I beat again, and someone 'eard, for they knocked three times regular and three times again, and to answer I beat with the 'eft of my knife. And then they worked awful, and there was bitter times when they rested, and in all the cold of the levanter and the wetness of the flyin' spray I sweated like a bull, and then I



was as cold as ice. And in an 'our or more, there was some sign that what they did was tellin' on the plate they worked on. For all of a sudden I 'eard a strange sound like the 'issing of steam blowin' off. 'Twas the compressed air inside that kept the wreck afloat comin' sharp out of a bit of a crack. And I knew that every second she'd sink more and more, and I seemed to see that unless the plate came off quick, they'd only die the quicker for tryin' to escape. And I called to 'em, but they 'eard nothin', only knowin' that a man was above 'em. And I got my knife under the plate and the blade broke. I worked sobbin', and all the time I was talkin'. 'Twas madness, plain and to be 'eard, and then I felt a smash into the iron, and the end of a splice bar came through it, and the air screamed up under me, and I knocked again three times, and they knocked three times, and I screamed out, 'Billy! Jack!' and the poor chaps 'eard me. Jack's voice came to me like a voice out o' the grave, thin and eager, and all of a scream:

" 'Tom—Tom! '

" 'That was me! Oh, the sea at my cold feet, and the sound of the wind, and the red pulsin' of Volcano, and the round 'ump of the *Red Star* 'ove out o' the sea like the bulk of a dead whale, and under me my brothers. There's brothers don't love each other!

" I screamed:

" 'Work—work! '

" And the sea crawled up to me, or so it seemed, and the thick air spurted up at me that was their life. And they broke out a bit more, and 'twas an

'ole a man's 'and could come through. And they stopped, so that I cried again to 'em. I 'eard Jack plain.

" 'I'm about done, lad! '

" 'Where's Billy? '

" 'I beat on cold and ragged iron.

" 'He's here,' said Jack, 'but the air's too bad for him.'

" 'I bade him give me the bar, and I worked outside like a mad one. But they'd struck the only rotten spot, and I couldn't get edge or claws of the bar under the plate. 'The water's risin',' said Jack. He put 'is poor 'and out, and I took it. Sir, I didn't think there was a God then! And the sea lipped at me, and the *Red Star* wallowed, and there was red on the edge of the lipping waves from a big glare of Volcano.

" 'I've no purchase to get an 'old out 'ere,' I said. And still the 'ot thick air came up, foul as could be. And Jack took the bar and dropped it. There's a strange weakness comes over one breathin' such air. I 'eard 'is voice again :

" 'The bar's deep in water, I can't feel it.'

" Then he lifted Billy, and Billy put 'is 'and out.

" 'She's sinkin', Tom,' said Billy. 'E spoke like a chap in a dream and the water was to my feet as I sat across the keel. And I felt the boy's strength give, and I 'eld 'is 'and tight. But neither him nor Jack spoke again, and the boy struggled dreadful. And presently 'er bows was deeper than 'er stern, and I felt water inside of 'er, and I knew they was dead. And I 'ad an 'old of the boy's 'and, and me cryin' and shriekin' out I don't know

what. Then 'e slipped away, and I was all awash. And I floated off and took 'old of a big bit of gratin', and the old *Red Star* 'eaved up 'er stern a bit, and then went down. And I lay till dawn on the gratin', no sensible man, but crazy, and old Volcano winked at me, like a red flare in a fog. And I dreamed of sailin' in a ship, with Jack captain as 'e meant to be some day, being given to larnin', and at daybreak a fishin' craft took me into Messina."

I walked the deck of the fo'c'slehead with him for many long silent minutes. Then someone struck two bells aft, and he struck it on the big bell at the break of the fo'c'slehead. He walked for'ard alone. He called to me after a minute.

"Do you see a light on the port bow, sir?" he asked me.

"I see it, Gilby."

"That's Volcano, sir."

He reported it to the officer on the bridge.



THE CREW OF THE *KAMMA*  
*FUNDER*



## THE CREW OF THE *KAMMA FUNDER*

THE stars of European science, who had been shining in a wonderful constellation over Quebec, were just about to leave Canada in that well-known comfortable liner, the *Nipigon*, when a most annoying thing happened. The cattle-ship *Abbitibbe*, never famous at any time for minding her helm, got her steam steering gear jammed as she was passing the *Nipigon*, and took a wide sheer to port when she should have altered her course to starboard. The peaceful preparations of the passenger boat were broken up, and her crew received the wild charge of the *Abbitibbe* with curses, which, though effectual in heating the atmosphere, were no use as a fender. The *Nipigon* was cut down to the water's edge, and the scientific lights of Europe were much put out. They hurried ashore in the most irregular and unscientific manner, and, having sent others for their baggage, began to make preparations for going to New York, as no other good passenger boat was leaving the St. Lawrence for a week.

But Nature, possibly out of revenge for the unseemly curiosity evinced by all men of science, was beforehand with them. Misfortunes, as was once

observed by an intelligent, if pessimistic, anthropoid ape, never come singly. It was the twelfth of November, and a sudden blizzard, bringing all the snow it could carry, broke up communication with the south. If the men of science were to keep their appointments with their universities, it was necessary to sail from Canada at once. They shipped themselves under protest upon the *Nemagosenda*, of 2,900 tons register, which was little better than a tramp, and was commanded by Captain Joseph Prowse.

"Immortal Jehoshaphat!" said Captain Prowse; "here's a go! What, we with passengers! Oh, get out!"

"You've got to take 'em," said the agent philosophically; "maybe they'll teach you something, and it'll be a good advertisement."

"Gah'n!" said Prowse; "carryin' scientific jossers won't bring better freight next season. I wish you'd get me chock up with cattle; I can't stand scientists; my sister married one that was an 'erbalist in the Old Kent Road—and since he went to chokey I've lost conceit with science. However, if it must be—why, send 'em along!"

Captain Prowse was not a popular skipper with sailors. They said that he was a "hard nut" and a "sailor-robber," and that his American experience had made him nearly as deadly as any American captain with a belaying-pin. But sailors' experience only works backward: they are good at reminiscence only, and the *Nemagosenda* got a crew in spite of the captain's reputation. It is possible they would not have shipped if they had known that men of



European light and leading were to come with them. Those who follow the sea have a great respect for knowledge, but they despise men in soft hats and spectacles. And it cannot be denied that scientific men are as a rule too simple and gentle to look as if they could take care of themselves. According to Jack, that is the first duty of man, though he premises naturally that even the toughest courage and the greatest skill may come to grief about women.

"A thunderin' measly lot," said Simpkins A.B. to his particular mate, when the scientific passengers came on board; "why, they've all soft 'ats but one! And long beards! And three out of four with specs! Holy sailor, what a gang!"

Harris nodded.

"Why, there's twenty of 'em, Bill, but I'll bet a plug of the best to an old chew that me and you goin' for 'em with belayin'-pins could do up the 'ole crowd in five minutes."

"You've sized 'em up," said Simpkins, with a sneer, and then the captain roared.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the mate. "Let go! All gone, sir! Now then, haul in." And the *Nemagosa* went out into the stream.

It took some two days or so for the men of science to settle down. For during the first few days the pathology of sea-sickness occupied all their attention; they had no time for other things. But when their last all-night session was over, and they were seen again upon deck, the affairs of the *Nemagosa* became interesting. The mate and the port watch developed long-threatened divergencies, and Captain Prowse came to the assistance of his

chief officer with a brass belaying-pin. As the result of this the pathologist indulged in a little practical surgery, and a division arose in the scientific ranks. The political economist argued with the statistician.

"Statistics prove that the common sailor must be treated with sternness," said the authority in figures, "and it is our duty to support authority."

"The captain is a brute," said the political economist, "and for two pins I would tell him so. You cannot neglect the human factor——"

"Says political economy," sneered the statistician.

And then the geologist, who was a man of sense, said they were both talking rot. The discussion on the poop was broken up by the captain, who came on deck with a face like the north-west moon in a fog. Having demanded the presence of the crew aft, he gave them an address on their duties to their superiors.

"You think yourselves a fine lot of chaps," said the captain fiercely, "but my opinion of you is that you are a scaly crowd of wharf-rats, and all your relations of both sexes are no better than they should be. So look here, you swine, I'll have you know I'm Captain Joseph Prowse, and the man that gives any slack jaw to any officer of mine gives it to me. And the man that gives it to me will wish he was dead before he sees Liverpool. That's me. I'm Captain Joseph Prowse, so I am, and any crew under me has got to know it. I'm king here, and I'll wade in blood before I get off my throne. Mr. Watts, put this crawling lot to holystoning the deck!"

And Captain Joseph Prowse rejoined his scientific passengers.

"All crews is the same, gentlemen," he said thickly; "there's something deep and dark in the nature of things as makes 'em so. Those that do the rough work on board ships are just so necessarily, and if I was to ship a crew of angels, though they might be handy for going aloft, they'd turn devils by the time they'd ate a pound of beef and biscuit."

"Have you ever tried kindness and persuasion?" asked the meteorologist.

The captain looked him up and down.

"Ever tried it!" he ejaculated scornfully; "'ave I ever tried anything else? It's kindness to sailormen to let 'em know who's boss. Spare the belayin'-pin and the 'andspike and you'll spoil the sailor. Oh, Solomon know'd his business when he used them words. He didn't sail to Ophir for nothin'."

"But, Captain Prowse," said the meek gentleman, whose great subject was cannibalism, "isn't it very unpleasant work rubbing the decks with stones this cold weather?"

"Unpleasant!" said the skipper, "and what do you think? Was I proposin' to reward 'em?"

"I suppose not," said the ethnologist, "but I'm sure it's awful work. I could never do it."

Captain Prowse snorted.

"Oh yes, you could, if you was in my crew," he remarked. "If one of you gents was captain, you'd find this crowd couldn't do nothing but sit in the fo'c'sle and drink 'ot coffee. It's all accordin' where you are, and what kind of a man's on top."

"In other words, circumstance creates character," said the statistician.

"That's a ridiculous exaggeration," said the authority on heredity. "A man is what he is born."

Captain Joseph Prowse laughed scornfully.

"Not he—he's what I makes of him, and if you gents was under me I'd make you sailors long afore you suspected it. By the way, could you tell me what branch of science an 'erbalist belongs to?"

And the conversation followed more pleasant lines.

The *Nemagosenda*, although little better than a tramp in her appearance, could do her ten knots an hour on less than twenty tons of coal a day, and she soon got out to the Banks, where the men of science discussed fishing, and the colour of sea-water, and icebergs.

"Yes," said the geologist, "an iceberg swims on an average seven-eighths below and an eighth above."

"Gammon!" said Captain Prowse rudely; "why, any sailor knows better. I'm surprised at a scientific josses like you bein' so ignorant. It's one-third above and two below. You ask my mate if it isn't so."

"Ah, thanks, I will," said the geologist pleasantly. "Mr. Watts is a well-informed man?"

"Rather," said Prowse, nodding; "there's not a den o' thieves in any port in Europe he can't find blindfold. And 'e knows more about icebergs than me, for he once went a trip in a Dundee whaler. He ain't proud of it, and don't talk of it much, for whalers is no class, as you may guess. But he's keen on knowledge is Watts, I'll say that for him."

You might do worse than ask him for some ackerate information. He's a perfect whale on fogs too ! ”

If Mr. Watts was the authority on fogs that his captain made out, he soon had an opportunity of showing it, for half-way across the Banks it was impossible to see farther than one could throw half a hundredweight, and the *Nemagosenda* went tooting in darkness. But every now and again in this dim world the men of science were alarmed and entertained by sudden battles in blasphemy between Captain Prowse, or the well-informed Mr. Watts, and the crew of a Bank fisherman. For fog blankets sound in the oddest, most erratic way, and the throb of a screw cannot always be heard, even in the calmest foggy weather. Such swearing matches between the *Nemagosenda* and a smack were, when apparently good for three minutes or so, sometimes sliced right in two by the sudden dropping down of what the meteorologist called an “ anacoustic ” wall of fog. Like the last words of Don Whiskerandos in *A Tragedy Rehearsed*, a speech was cut off in the very flower of its youth.

“ Where the blue blinding blazes are you coming to ? ” asked a faint nocturne. And when Captain Prowse had expended his last carefully prepared oration, the right of maritime reply only conferred an audible “ Oh, you dog——”

“ We have to thank the anacoustic properties of that fog bank for the sudden conclusion,” said the meteorologist, “ for if I'm any judge of human nature, that smacksman is still firing red-hot words into space.”

“ Yes, sir,” said Prowse indignantly, “ they're a

foul-mouthed lot. It's as much as I can do to keep even with 'em. But I'll slow down no more."

He telegraphed " Full speed ahead ! " and left Mr. Watts with awfully worded instructions to sink anything, from a battleship to the meanest brig afloat. In the saloon he sat at the head of the table, and drank rum hot.

" Science proves that rum 'ot is the sailor's drink," said Captain Prowse, " and the correct drink. For we all drink it, and flourish on it. And the reason is that it goes by contraries. It's cold work bein' at sea, and so we takes it 'ot; and the sea is salt, so we takes it sweet; and it comes from the West Indies."

" And that proves it," said the geologist warmly. " What a head you have, Captain Prowse ! "

The skipper nodded.

" You may well say so," he affirmed; " a phrenologist gave me a chart of my 'ead once, a scientific chart with the soundings wrote out plain, and what proved him right was his sayin' that 'ere and there I was too deep for him. And I paid him a guinea. Well worth it, it was, for he said, ' You get married,' and I done so, and Mrs. Prowse hasn't her living equal. I wish I'd brought that chart with me. It would 'ave interested you gents to know what a brother scientist thought of me."

" It would indeed," said the pathologist.

" But there, I'll tell you what I am," said Prowse. " I'm a down-righter, that's me. I'm captain of my boat, I am, and if I was afloat on a hencoop, with all its crew, I'd like to see the cock as would crow before I gave him orders. Authority comes

nat'ral to me. I'll be boss wherever I am—(Hancocks, more rum!)—and I would have succeeded in whatsoever I took hold of. Phrenology told me so, wrote out plain. And I've a kind of leanin' towards science ever since that phrenologist put 'is 'and on my 'ead and said with a start of surprise, ' Captain, you're a wonder.' But I've always wondered what it was made scientific chaps look so 'elpless.—(Hancocks, more rum.)—But don't you fret, gents; I'm Captain Joseph Prowse, and I'll put you safe ashore or die in the attempt."

And as he again ejaculated "Hancocks, more rum," he fell asleep upon the table.

"Gentlemen," said the geologist, "as our interests are now secure, I vote we go to bed."

But it was still a heavy fog, and the *Nemagosenda* was doing her ten knots an hour. Other steamers were doing the same, or even more. Some twenty-knot liners slowed down, in order that they might say that they had slowed down, to about nineteen knots and a half; and some, acting on the theory that the sooner they went through the fog-belt, the better for everyone, gave their engines all the steam they could make, and stepped out for America or England at the pace of an indolent torpedo-boat. And the result of this was that at about four bells in the middle watch, when the mate's aching eyes could see forty imaginary steamers where there were none, he omitted to observe that there was a real one coming for him till it was too late. The *Nemagosenda* uttered one long horrid wail, which was answered in vain, and the next minute the men of science were shot out of their bunks, and their

steamer was taking in the Atlantic through a hole about the size of a dock gate.

What became of the lucky, or unlucky, boat, which got her blow in first, the crew of the sinking steamer did not inquire. They heard her toot in the distance, and in answer they blew their whistle for help. But though a whistle in a fog may be evidence of good faith, it is not necessarily for wide publication, and it is quite possible that the stranger, if she did not sink, lost her bearings in the fog, and went off in the wrong direction. At any rate the crew and passengers of the *Nemagosenda* found themselves adrift in three boats, and in less than a quarter of an hour they heard, though they could not see, their steamer up-end and do a deep sea dive.

"All up with the *Goose-ender*," said the crew sulkily, "and now of course it will blow."

As ill-luck and hurry would have it, in the last rush for life most of the crew had tumbled into the mate's and second mate's boats. With the lights of science were the captain and Simpkins, A.B.

"Immortal Jehoshaphat!" said Captain Joseph Prowse, "this is a pretty state of affairs. That man-drowning swine of a liner! I 'ope she's gone down! I hope the codfish are sizing her captain up, and sayin' what they think of him. Simpkins, keep holloaing! Where's them other boats?"

"I can't holler no more, sir," whispered Simpkins hoarsely, "my throat's give out."

And as the wind rose the three boats drifted apart. Four eminent scientific persons at the oars kept their boat head on to sea, and six other eminent persons lay on the bottom boards and wished they were dead,



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until the dawn crawled into the east and showed them that they were alone.

It was a chill and watery dawn, and as the boat topped the cold green waves on the edge of the Bank the prospect was eminently unkind. The wind was not heavy, but it blew hard enough to bring the spray of each curling wave inboard, and everyone was soaked to the skin. The sky was lowering and overcast, and though the fog was dissipated, a mist covered the sun till it looked, as Simpkins remarked, about as warm as a new tin plate.

It must be said for Captain Joseph Prowse that he retained in some measure those characteristics of authority which he claimed for himself, and by a forced optimism, which the nature of his crew made him adopt, he endeavoured to cheer them up.

"My luck's temporary out," he declared, with some show of cheerfulness, "but it ain't the first time I've been run down, and with God's 'elp, gents, it won't be the last. And it's clean against the nature of things for so many learn'd men to come to grief at one fell blow. 'Ere or there a scientific jossor may come to grief in a crowd, but so many bein' together is the best of insurances. I'll pull you through; you mind me. All I ask you to remember is that I'm captain, and what I says goes now and always."

"It's all very well," said the meteorologist, whose temper was going with the skin of his hands, "but we all thought you had no right to run so fast in a fog."

Captain Prowse gasped, and then recovered himself.

" Didn't I tell you I was captain here, same as in the steamer? "

" You did," said the sulky man of science.

" Then hold your jaw," said Captain Prowse; " when you, or the likes of you, is asked for criticism, it'll be time for you to give it. Till then you'll give your captain no lectures on the running of his vessel. God and the Queen's enemies 'as sunk my ship, but neither one nor the other has took away my natural gift of authority, so shut up! "

And though the meteorologist choked with rage, he said no more. Simpkins and the captain consulted.

" We're right in the track of steamers more or less," said Captain Prowse, " and it bein' so damp we can hang out without much drink for a day or so. And biscuit we 'ave plenty."

Simpkins nodded.

" Yes, sir, but this 'ere's a sulky useless lot, sir."

" So they are," said Prowse, " but they'll 'ave to shape themselves as I bid 'em. The first crooked word and there'll be a man of science missing out of this bright gal-acksy of talent. I don't care where I am, but there I'll be captain. I don't care if they was my owners, I'd run 'em all the same. They ain't passengers no more, they're my crew."

He took a drink out of a flask and sank back in the stern-sheets.

" I want you men to keep your eyes skinned," he said presently. " Which of you is the astronomer? "

" I am," answered the bow oar, who was a long, thin man, in a wideawake and spectacles.

" Then keep a bright look-out or you'll see stars,"

said Prowse. "And while I'm on it, I want you jossers to know that you ain't passengers no more, but a boat's crew, and my boat's crew, and you'll have to look lively when I sing out. So the sooner we get a bit farther south the better it will be. That will do."

And muttering that he meant being captain whether he was on an ice-floe or a mud-barge, he fell asleep and snored.

"This brute is coming out in his true colours," said the astronomer. "What did he mean by saying I should see stars?"

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Simpkins, "he meant he'd plug you."

"Plug me?"

"Bung your eye up," explained Simpkins, "and Lor' bless you, he'd do it. Oh, a rare chap is the captain; why, some years half his money goes in fines."

"I wish to heaven I was ashore," said the poor astronomer, "and when I get there I'll see he never gets another job."

Simpkins eyed the sleeping skipper in alarm.

"Best not let him 'ear you, matey," he cried. "He'd haze you to death."

"Haze me?"

"Work you up," explained the seaman.

"What's that?"

"And I thot you was all learn'd!" said Simpkins, with great contempt. "I mean he'd just sock it to you till you was fair broke up."

The day passed without any incident of vital importance. It is true they sighted the smoke of a

steamer hull down on the southern horizon, but they saw nothing else across the waste of heaving water. Every now and again the captain woke up and made a few remarks on the nature of authority, and what he proposed doing to those who did not "knuckle under." But the night fell without any signs of mutiny on the part of the scientific crew.

In the very early dawn the astronomer, who had slept in uneasy snatches, woke up for the tenth time and changed his position. Simpkins and the geologist were keeping the boat before the sea, which was rather heavier, and they were both half-blind with fatigue.

"I believe I see something out there," said the astronomer feebly.

"You are always seein' suthin'," said Simpkins crossly, but as he spoke he looked round and almost dropped his oar.

"Wake up, sir!" he shouted. "Here's a barque almost so near we could touch her."

The skipper roused up, and with him the rest. They jumped to their feet.

"Sit down, sit down, you gang of idiots," said the captain; "d'ye want to capsize us?"

"Oh, we are saved, we are saved!" said the ethnologist, for within half a mile of them a vessel lay with her main-topsail aback. There was nothing odd about her to the uneducated eye, but the skipper looked at Simpkins, and Simpkins looked at the skipper.

"Derelict," said both.

For with such a light breeze it was absurd to see a barque with nothing set but a close-reefed main-

topsail, and a fore-topmast staysail hanging in hanks like a wet duster.

"She has seen us," said the geologist.

"Seen your grandmother," said the skipper rudely. "There ain't a soul aboard her, and she's water-logged and loaded with lumber out of Halifax, and she's a northerner, and about six hundred tons register. Get the oars out. Even if her decks are awash, she'll be better than this boat."

By the time they came within a cable's length of her, it was broad daylight, and the least maritime member of any European scientific society was able to form an opinion as to her being derelict. As she rolled, the water came out of her scuppers, for her maindeck was almost level with the sea. Part of the gear was let go, and most of the yards were chafing through their parrals, the main-topgallant yard, indeed, was only hanging by the tie and the lifts, and came crash against the mast every time the sea lifted the vessel's bows. Half the bulwarks were gone, and the remains of the displaced deck cargo showed through the gaps. As they got up to her she went right aback and came round slowly on her heel.

"Row up close, sir," said Simpkins, "and I'll jump."

"No," said Captain Prowse, "not with this lot. I wouldn't go near her with a crew of misfits like these, not for money. We'll go a bit closer, and you must swim."

And in ten minutes Simpkins was on board. He threw the end of a vang across the boat, and they brought her astern.

"Thank Heaven," said the men of science as they trod the slippery decks of the *Kamma Funder*, belonging to Copenhagen.

But their troubles were only just beginning.

The skipper walked aft on the slippery deck, and climbed upon the poop by way of the rail, for some of the loose lumber had dislodged and smashed the poop ladder. When he found his foot upon his native heath, he was once more Captain Joseph Prowse in all his glory; and turning about, he addressed his crew.

"Simpkins," he said, "you are chief officer, second officer, and bo'son, and don't you forget it. As for you others, I'll have you know that you're the crew. Just drop any kind of 'eightedened notion that you are passengers, and we'll get along easy; but if you don't, look out for squalls. Simpkins, turn this useless lot to throwin' the remains of the deck cargo overboard, and try a couple of 'em at the pumps; maybe her seams may have closed up again by now." And going aft to the scuttle, he disappeared from view.

"Well," said the geologist, "of all the infernal——"

"Oh, stow that," cried Simpkins, "and turn to. You're here, ain't you, and lucky you should consider yourself. And the captain's a man of his word, as I know; so look slippy and pass this bloomin' truck over the side."

The miserable crew looked at each other in despair.

"Come now," said Simpkins impatiently, "do you want me to report you chaps as refusin' duty?"

The geologist, who was the youngest and sturdiest

man in the crowd, said that he did; but the astronomer and the entomologist remonstrated with him.

"I think we'd better," said the unhappy insect man. "This Prowse seems a regular brute."

"He is," said the astronomer, "and I pray to Heaven that he doesn't find any rum on board."

But Heaven did not listen, and the captain presently came on deck with a flushed face.

"Simpkins," roared Prowse, as his head appeared over the edge of the scuttle.

"Yes, sir," said the new mate.

"Is that lumber over the side yet?"

"Quick, for Gawd's sake," said Simpkins, and the reluctant men of science commenced sliding the boards over.

"It's going, sir," answered Simpkins.

"Goin'!" said Prowse, when he got his hands on the after poop rail. "Goin'! I should say so! What a crowd! Oh, you miserable things, I'll shape you; I'll get you into condition; I'll make sailors of you. Get two of these hoosiers on to the pumps and see if she's leakin' very bad, and then we'll make sail. This 'ere *Kamma Funder* won't make a quick passage, but by the time we're picked up, or sail 'er 'ome, I'll make you chaps fit to ship in the worst Cape Horner that ever sailed."

He turned away, but stopped.

"And when the deck's clear, Simpkins, you can let 'em eat what they can get. There's plenty of biscuit, but mighty little else. Now then, you Stars, pump!"

And the astronomer and entomologist pumped for their lives, while the sea round about the water-logged

barque was whitening rapidly with many thousand feet of Nova Scotian lumber. For when the captain was out of sight, Simpkins was encouraging, and talked what he told them was "horse" sense.

"You wants to get back 'ome to your families, don't you," he asked, "and to your instruments and your usual ways of livin'? Why, of course you does. Then buck up, and pitch in, and learn to do your dooty. I'm not a hard man. I can make allowances. I know you didn't ship to do this. But it's your luck, and you must. Now then, that'll do the deck. Just lay into this pump all of you, and I'll sound 'er again."

And as good luck would have it, there soon appeared some reason for hoping that the leaks in the *Kamma Funder* had closed.

"Blimy," said Simpkins, "we'll 'ave 'er sailin' like a witch yet. Chuck yerselves into it, and I'll call the captain."

But the captain was fast asleep in the bunk of the late skipper.

"What's become of her crew?" asked the new crew, as they sat round the deck and ate their biscuit.

"Took off by a steamer," said Simpkins; "you see they've left their boats, and the captain says the ship's papers 'as gone, so they was took off, for sure."

"I wish we were taken off," said the weary astronomer.

"That'll come, I dessay," replied the consolatory Simpkins, "but if we sails 'er 'ome, we'll get salvage, and your time won't be wasted. So cheer up, and



let's make sail, while a couple of you keeps the pumps a-goin'."

The wind by now was a light north-westerly breeze, and though the barque worked heavily and wallowed in the sea, Simpkins took her as she went round and put the geologist at the helm.

"Keep the wind in the back o' your neck," said Simpkins to the nervous helmsman, "and I'll loose the foresail."

He jumped up aloft and loosed the foresail and two fore-topsails. Coming down, he got the scientific crew to work.

"Here you, ketch hold of this and pull. There, that will do. Belay! Tie the thing up, I mean; on that thing, you silly ass!"

And the member of the Royal Society, who was thus addressed for the first time since he had left school, made the starboard foresheet fast to the cleat.

"You ain't such an ass as you wants to make out," said Simpkins, as he watched him critically; "me and the captain will soon put you chaps in shape. Now then, all of you! Fore-topsail 'alliards! Stretch it out and lay back. Which of you can sing?"

They declared that none of them could.

"Then I must," said Simpkins; and he gave them the chanty "Handily, boys, so handy," until he had the topsail well up. And just as the crew were looking aloft with a strange new feeling of actual pleasure in seeing results grow under their hands, a sudden row arose aft. The captain was interviewing the geologist.

"Steer small," said Captain Prowse; "don't work the bally wheel as if you was workin' a chaff-cutter."

"I'm doin' my best," said the furious man of science, "and I beg you will speak to me civilly."

"I'll speak to you how I like," said Prowse; "didn't I tell you a while back as you wasn't a passenger no more, but one of my crew?"

"Sir," said the geologist, "I beg that you will be so good as to refrain from speaking to me. I am not accustomed to be talked to in that tone."

Captain Prowse gasped, and, walking hurriedly to the side, endeavoured to pull a fixed belaying-pin from the rail. After three or four trials he came to a loose one. By this time the *Kamma Funder* was yawing all abroad, and when Captain Prowse came towards the wheel again, the geologist let go, and in his turn sought for a weapon. The captain caught the wheel in time to prevent the vessel getting right aback, and roared:

"Mutiny, mutiny!"

Simpkins and the scientific association came running aft.

"Simpkins," shrieked Prowse, "ketch hold of that geological chap."

"I dare either of you to touch me," said the geologist; "the first one that does, I'll brain him!"

He held the iron pin firmly, and looked desperate.

"Come and ketch hold of the wheel," said Prowse, in a choking voice.

"No, don't let him," said the offender, and a violent argument arose.

"This is perfectly scandalous," said the meek astronomer, "and——"

"We won't put up with it," cried the entomologist.

"I must obey orders," said Simpkins.

"Or I'll murder you," screamed the skipper.

"If he lets go she'll be took aback," said Simpkins, "and it'll be a lot of trouble."

"We don't care," said the men of science, and then the captain let go and rushed for the geologist. Simpkins broke from the astronomer and caught the spinning wheel just as the geologist knocked the captain down.

"Oh," cried the pathologist, "I believe you've killed him."

"I hope so," said the hero of the occasion, with rather a pale face, "I'm not going to be bullied by any coarse brute of a sailor."

"He's the captain!" urged Simpkins.

But mutiny was in their hearts. They all talked at once, and the pathologist felt the captain's skull to see whether it was still sound.

"Will he die?"

"No," said the doctor, "he has a skull like a ram's. Take him below."

"And lock him in," said the astronomer. "And we can argue with him through the door."

It was a happy thought, and even Simpkins, in spite of his ingrained respect for the lawful authority of the most lawless skipper, approved the suggestion.

"You ain't all so soft as you look," said Simpkins, "but the sea does bring the devil out in a man if so be he's got any."

And they carried Captain Joseph Prowse down below. As his door would not lock, they jammed short pieces of sawed lumber between it and the other side of the alley way, as it opened outwards.

"It's mutiny," said Simpkins, "but it's done, and maybe he'll cool off when he comes to and finds his 'ead aching."

But nevertheless the situation was not pleasant, and no one was quite certain as to what should be done.

"Hold a committee meeting," said the entomologist.

The others said that was nonsense. Simpkins, who now looked on the geologist as captain of the mutineers, touched his hat to him, and begged leave to speak.

"Well," said the geologist, "what is it?"

"Ain't some of you gents good at instruments?" asked Simpkins. "For if you are, and if you could get hold of a sextant, it would be doin' things regular if you was to take a sight of the sun."

The ethnologist turned to the astronomer.

"How humanity yearns for a certain regularity!" he said; "it would really comfort Simpkins if you would squint at the sun through a gaspipe."

"You find me the sextant," said the astronomer, "and I'll do it."

"What, you?" said Simpkins. "I'd never ha' thought it."

Though he could not be induced to say in public why he would never have thought it, in private he revealed to the inquisitive ethnologist that the astronomer looked "the measliest of the whole gang, sir."

The discussion, which had been held on deck, with Simpkins at the wheel, was broken up by the captain hammering furiously on his jammed door.

"Go down and soother him," said Simpkins nervously, "and mind you tell him I done nothin' but give in to superior overwhelmin' odds. For so I did, gentlemen, so I did, as you know, bein' those as done it."

The committee went below, with the geologist leading. He carried his belaying-pin in his pocket. As they marched, the uproar was tremendous.

"What a skull he must have!" said the ethnologist. "I wish I had it in my collection."

"So do I," said the pathologist.

And the authority on geology pressed to the front rank, for Captain Joseph Prowse was doing his best.

"Lemme out," he roared; "oh, when I do get out, I'll show you what I am."

"Shut up!" said the young geologist, with firmness.

The captain gave an audible gasp.

"Shut up?" he inquired weakly.

"Yes," said the leader, "and give us your sextant, if you have one."

"Well, I'm damned," said Prowse, after a long and striking pause. "May I inquire if you've took command? For if so, and you require my services to peel pertaters and sweep the deck, just say so, and let me out."

"Will you be civil if we let you out?" asked the astronomer kindly.

"Civil?" said Prowse, choking; "what do you think?"

"We don't think you will be," replied the astronomer, "from the tone of your voice."

"I'm sure he won't be," said the geologist.

"We'd better keep him where he is," said the rest anxiously; "why, the man's nothing but a raging lunatic."

"Oh!" said Prowse from within. "Look here, you mutineers, is Simpkins in this?"

"No," said the geologist, who showed a little humour occasionally, "he's out of it. He tried to rescue you, so we hanged him. But he came to again, and is now at the wheel. What about that sextant?"

"I ain't got no sextant," said Prowse sulkily. He recognized it was no use kicking, and the rum was dying out of his aching head.

"Then let's go on deck," said the men of science. "What's the use of talking to him."

"Oh, please," said the subdued skipper; but they paid no attention, and returned to Simpkins.

At various intervals during the day Prowse made more and more pitiful appeals to be let out. But as the weather was clear and bright, Simpkins and his "overwhelming odds" were at work on deck, and paid little or no attention. Simpkins now did not take his line from the skipper, but, feeling that the command was in commission, adopted the manner of the sergeant-instructor at a gymnasium.

"Now, if a couple or four of you gentlemen would keep the pumps going," he urged from his station at the wheel, "we should get along a deal better.

And if you, sir, would come and take the wheel agin for two shakes of a lamb's tail, I don't see no reason I shouldn't loose the upper main-topsail."

So the geologist took the wheel while Simpkins went aloft and loosed the upper main-topsail.

"Supposing you wanted to have less sail presently," said the astronomer to Simpkins, when the topsail was set, "what would you do?"

"You gents would 'ave to 'elp stow it," said Simpkins.

"What, go aloft?" asked the astronomer.

"And why not?" demanded Simpkins. "It's easy, going aloft—as easy as fallin' from the side of an 'ouse."

"So I should think," cried the astronomer, shivering, "I hope the weather will remain fine."

"You know it's really remarkable how useful such an uneducated man can be," he said presently to some of the others. "Now, what use am I?"

Simpkins was passing and heard this. He paused and eyed the astronomer.

"Well, to speak the truth, sir," he said sympathetically, "you ain't much; but you do what you can at the end of a rope. And I shouldn't be surprised if you're all right at 'ome."

"All of which is good against vanity," said the astronomer, as the barque under most of her plain sail steered east-south-east into the track of the Atlantic liners. "And do you know, absurd as it may seem, I am beginning to feel very well indeed—better than I have done for years."

As the night fell, the captain, who had by that

time lost all his alcoholic courage, appealed for mercy. He shouted his petition to those on deck through the cabin port-hole. But he tried Simpkins first.

"Simpkins," he yelled.

"Yes, sir," said Simpkins, with his head over the rail.

"Come and let me out."

"I darn't, sir," said Simpkins; "they're all very fierce and savage agin you, especial about your using bad language, and each of 'em 'as a belayin'-pin and is a-watchin' of me. It's more than my life's worth to let you out. And——"

"Yes?" said the skipper.

"It's more'n yours is worth too. You must ask 'em civil."

"*And give your word of honour,*" suggested the ferocious geologist in a whisper.

"And give your word of honour——"

"*To act civilly and quietly to everyone.*"

"To act civil and quiet, sir," said Simpkins.

"*And not to talk too much about authority, or drink any more rum,*" prompted the savage astronomer.

"And not to be too rumbumptious, or to get squiffy again," said Simpkins.

"For," said the brutal geologist, "if you will agree to these terms, we shall be glad of your advice and assistance, Captain Prowse."

"I'll think of it," returned the skipper sulkily.

"All right," said the rude geologist, "take a day or two to think it over."

"Oh, Lord," said Prowse hastily. "I've thought of it, and I agree."



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And when he came on deck the savage and ferocious scientific captains remarked in a friendly manner that it was a fine evening.

"Damme," said the one-time skipper, "I'm blowed if *I* ain't the crew of the *Kamma Funder*."



**THE REHABILITATION  
OF THE VIGIA**



## THE REHABILITATION OF THE VIGIA

THE mate of the *Palembang* walked the weather side of the poop, and felt just then that he was full up to the back teeth of the mighty sea and all its works. He yearned for Leith Walk, or Wapping; to lie on a hot dry beach would be heaven, for the hot wet south-west monsoon was blowing the *Palembang* towards Bombay and the Maldivhs were on the starboard beam.

Jack Wilson propped his eyes open and cursed the slow passage of time towards midnight. As he peered down below at the lighted clock he was inclined to swear that the second mate had come out and stopped it. But presently it was close on to twelve, and to his disgust sleepiness passed away as his relief stumbled up the poop ladder and came aft.

"Jerusalem, but it's dark," said the second greaser, as he looked up aloft and round about him.

"Have the gas lit," growled Wilson, as he was going forward.

"Sulky devil!" replied the second. "When do you have a civil word for anyone?"

This was all in the night's work, and no one was a penny the worse. Civility at midnight is often too

dear to be bought from anyone but an inferior; and Wilson and Green knew each other very well.

The *Palembang* was running with the wind on the port quarter, and for a quiet life the old lady was under shortened canvas. She went at it like an old dame in wind and snow; a reefed foresail represented picked-up petticoats; the stowed royals and topgallantsails suggested that a hat with feathers had been replaced by a handkerchief. For the monsoon was blowing stiff that July night seven degrees to the north of the Line, and threatened to blow stiffer yet.

As it was getting towards two o'clock, or four bells, the captain came on deck, and nodded at the binnacle when Green said: "Good-morning, sir." Then he spread his legs out and considered the dark universe for a while.

"It has waked up a bit since I went below, Mr. Green," he said presently; and, wanting no answer, he got none. The song of the wind in the rigging and the draught under the foot of the foresail were answer sufficient. There was a pleasing hiss alongside as the *Palembang* shoved through the Indian Ocean and left a lighter wake behind.

"There's a vigia marked on the chart for hereabouts," said Captain Spiller presently; "it got there through that old fool Banks of the *Simoom*. He reported it years ago, but it warn't never confirmed. Rocks, he said, and one like Cleopatra's Needle."

"Then you don't credit it either, sir?" asked Green presently.

"I know Banks," replied Spiller, snorting, "and never was such a man for imagination and want of judgment. I'd take it as proof positive as nothing

was, if he said it stood to reason it must be. And I'm a man as likes a clean and decent chart. A chart is the character give to an ocean by them as has employed it, a bundle of *chits*, as the Hindoo beggars say, and to go an' lump in a suspicion agin the character of an ocean on the word of a man like Banks, why, I've no patience. I've a notion that the law of libel ought to have a say in it."

"Ay, sir," said Green. "The Indian Ocean *versus* Banks."

"And I'd believe it of Banks that he done it just to get his name mentioned, and to rise a bit of a palaver about him. He's a most conceited chap is Banks, and not by any means the seaman he'd like to be thought. And they actually sent a man-o'-war down to look up his Simoom Rocks, and they came back and never seen 'em."

"And nobody else ever did, sir?"

"Of course not," said Spiller; "they might as well set traps to catch the rats that a man sees when he's got the jimjams. And nothing makes Banks angrier than to throw out a hint you don't believe in them rocks. I always gets him on it, by asking for a clean chart and proved shoals, and what not, and giving it him hot and heavy on vigias and the like. Bah, I ain't no patience."

And Spiller tramped the deck for a bit. Presently he came back to where Green stood.

"He'll be in Bombay before us," he said gloomily. "I have to own the *Simoom's* faster than the *Palembang*, but if she was sailed by a better man she'd make quicker passages. Why, an engineer in a steamer can pass a thorough sailor in a scow."

His heart was bitter, but the thought that Her Majesty's cruiser *Amphion* had discredited the Simoom vigia was balm to his inmost soul, as he turned to go below.

"Keep a bright look-out," he growled, and he left Green to consider the matter of vigias in general, and the Simoom vigia in particular.

For these vigias, the terror of seamen, are like malicious spirits. Some man has seen them, or has imagined them, and for ever after they bear sway in the minds of those who sail upon the great deep. Perhaps they are but a floating mass of wreck, on which the sea breaks; in the south, what was seen was, it may be, a drifting berg; on the shores of West Africa, perchance a river has sent out a floating island. Any accident of imagination may create them; alcohol bears them on its tide; they are the rats and ghosts and terrible creeping things of the delirium of the sea that is born of rum. A heavy-heeled spar as it floats becomes a pinnacle of rock; the boat that bears dead men in it is for ever after to be avoided. Here a rip of currents, and there a heavy overfall, become fixed terrors and are given names.

For this is the sea that is unknown yet, and shall for ever be unknown. It works upon the mind of man very subtly, and yet again with tremendous strength. Under the sea are earthquakes, and in it volcanoes. Of these islands are born, and again they pass away, while the little creature man skims upon the surface of the ocean like a water-beetle, and may be seen no more.

When Green was left alone upon the poop of the *Palembang*, save for the presence of the man at the



wheel, something of the wonderful majesty of the sea came down upon him, and for a moment touched his nerves. Trust in the captain he had none, for Spiller was of the usual alcoholic order; so he got out the chart and looked at it. There stood the vigia marked "Simoom Rock." Perhaps it existed after all. He remembered the history of the Aurora Islands to the east of the Falklands. Even now, some old sailors believe there are such islands, real land, not ice grounded on deep soundings. And the Simoom vigia was close at hand, if it existed at all. Allowing for sufficient uncertainty in its supposed position, it might be anywhere within a degree. He stared out into the darkness and imagined he saw it. It was here, it was there, it was nowhere: it was a wraith of the mind, and dissolved. He put back his night-glasses, and whistled, till he remembered there was quite enough wind, and that he had no desire to turn the hands up to shorten sail.

"Jerusalem, it is dark," he said again, and he recalled Wilson's reply, "Have the gas lit." Ay, that would be pleasant. For a moment he saw the streets of London town with a diminuendo in lamps, and then he pulled himself together. It breezed up a bit and was four bells. He hove the log, and went along the leeside to go below to enter it on the slate. She made a biggish weather roll, and the decks being slippery, he steadied himself and put his head outside the rail to take a look ahead. And at that moment, as he says, he saw the Simoom vigia. His heart stood still, and then thumped furiously. In spite of the hiss of the seas, and the windy roar of the rigging, the sound of his pulse in his ears was like the sound

of a pump. He was paralysed, and yet he knew that the *Palembang* was rushing on destruction.

"Hard a starboard!" he said coolly, but in a choking voice.

"Sir?" said the astounded man at the wheel.

"Hard a starboard, damn you," said Green fiercely.

And the helmsman ground the wheel hard down with the air of a surprised martyr. As the *Palembang* bowed and came round almost at right angles to her former course, Green swears he saw broken water, though he lost the sharp pinnacle of rock he had seen at first.

Old Spiller, who was not asleep, came up on deck in a hurry.

"What's she off her course for?"

Green told him and Spiller swore.

"You saw nothing, you damn fool."

"I did."

"You didn't, you imaginative ass."

Green wanted to plant his fist between Spiller's eyes, but did not; for he was a married man and hated to lose a job. He ground his teeth and turned away. The *Palembang* was put on her course again, and after interrogating the man on the look-out and the man at the wheel, who acknowledged they had seen nothing, the skipper swore promiscuously at everything, and went below to lay his soul in soak.

"What one man sees another'll look for, and what a fool looks for a fool will see," he cried, without knowing what a neat addition he had made to the subject of suggestion. And by the time that Wilson relieved him at four o'clock Green was curiously

uncertain as to whether he had seen straight or not.

"Now, did you?" asked Wilson.

"Two hours ago I'd have sworn to it," said the second mate, scratching his head.

"Well, I've a notion you did," cried Wilson. "Between you and me and the mizzen-mast, I think Banks is a right smart man."

"I believe I can swear I saw it," said young Green, much encouraged. "Yes, there were at least three rocks, one of them a pinnacle like an obelisk."

And with Wilson secretly on his side, he was quite sure of it before they reached Bombay, though Spiller was for ever jeering at him, and making the ship as uncomfortable as he could.

"Mebbe you can see ghosts, too," he was constantly suggesting.

"I'll quit at Bombay if he'll give me my discharge," said Green.

And sure enough Spiller did, when he met Green on the Apollo Bunda in a confidential yarn with Banks, who, for a seaman of the old class, was a very gentlemanly man with neat white whiskers.

"You've been encouraging him about that vigia," roared Spiller, and when he wrote out Green's discharge, he offered to give him a special character for seeing ghosts.

"But not rats!" said Green nastily, as he put his discharge into his pocket; for the last time Spiller overdrank himself he had a very bad time with rodents.

It was the best of luck for Green that he got out of the *Palembang*, for Banks' mate fell ill; and the

second had no mate's ticket. So Green, being in great favour, through having seen the poor discredited Simoom vigia, got the job, for he had passed for mate just before signing on as second in the *Palembang*.

Banks took him round with him, and again tackled the captain of the *Amphion* about that vigia, showing his new witness; but Captain Melville shook his head.

"The old man is crazy about those rocks," was all he said, as he refused to discuss the matter.

But Banks and Spiller went at it hammer and tongs when they met ashore.

"He saw nothing," said Spiller.

"Only what I saw."

"I told the fool about it and he imagined the rest, as you did."

Banks fumed.

"Lucky you didn't run the *Palembang* on my imagination. Slow as she goes, she'd have slammed herself into matchwood."

Spiller choked with rage.

"Look here, I'll sail all over your blooming rocks, as I have done afore. You just made this up to get notoriety, and have your ship's name on the chart, and be put in the Directory. I know you, Banks, and I don't think much of you, and never did. To get yourself talked about you'd report that you'd seen the *Flying Dutchman*. Vigias, indeed! A disfigurement on any chart! You'll have the chart of the Indian Ocean as big a disgrace as the North Atlantic if you have your way. Didn't you find nothing new to report this time?"

Banks rose up in a towering rage.

"You're no gentleman, Captain Spiller, and I'll

“speak no more with you, not till you own that the Simoom Rocks are real. And may you never have occasion to rue finding them out as such. I’ll let you know I’ve as great a respect for the chart as you have, and if you ever run your old tub on my rocks, you can call ‘em Spiller’s Reef, for all I care, so there,” and he perspired off to his vessel.

In shipping circles opinion was divided between the master of the *Simoom* and the master of the *Palembang*. And it being the fashion of the sailor-man, or, for that matter, of human-kind in general, to decide matters that admit of doubt according to personal prejudice and ancient opinion, there were more on Spiller’s side than on Banks’. For one thing, it is the perpetual ambition of all true sons of the ocean to discover something new and have his ship’s name tagged on to it, and everyone was jealous of Banks. When the *Amphion* looked for the rocks without success, they threw out dark hints about a dead whale or a tree stump having been seen, and some said “Rum,” just as others said “Rats,” contemptuously.

Others, with a very fine contempt for the Navy, were of opinion that Captain Melville of H.M.S. *Amphion* considered he owned half the Indian Ocean and all the Arabian Sea, and would be as much put out at finding an unmarked rock or shoal in either as if he slipped upon an old chew on his own quarter-deck. These were on Banks’ side, of course. And some who disliked Spiller said they believed in this new set of rocks to annoy him, ending very naturally in holding the opinion they argued for.

When old Banks got on the high horse and swore

he would not speak again to the disbeliever in the vigia, he meant it, and added details to his statement.

"Not if I found him in a boat in the middle of the Indian Ocean," he swore excitedly.

The quarrel was as bitter as polemic theology. Spiller was a rank atheist, a scorner, a scoffer, a pagan, a heathen. If Banks had written a new creed, he would have begun it: "I believe in the Simoom Rocks to the west of the Maldivhs." He clung to their existence pathetically, and when an impecunious skipper of a storm-disgruntled tramp wanted to borrow a couple of hundred rupees from him, and remarked incidentally that he had seen broken water in the supposed position of the discredited reef, Banks forked out with enthusiasm and took down a lying statement joyfully.

But when the *Simoom* was ready for sea again, that same tramp skipper, who was a wild disgrace to the respectable mystery of the sea, executed a few manœuvres which let the *Palembang* get ahead of her. For the tramp (*Julius Cæsar* was her name) had engines of an obstinate and eccentric character. Sometimes they worked, and sometimes they didn't, and on this particular occasion they refused to be reversed at any price. As the *Julius Cæsar* wouldn't go astern, her captain shoved her at the crowded shipping ahead and put her through, whooping on the bridge like a maniac. He grazed three other steamers, took a bumpkin off a sailing vessel, slipped between two others, and in one last complicated evolution smashed the jib-boom of the *Simoom*, brought down her fore-topgall'n'-mast, and escaped

to sea in a cyclone of curses of which the calm centre was the *Palembang*.

"I'll report you," said Spiller to Banks, when he left Bombay.

"Go to hell," cried Banks, who rarely swore save in a gale of wind.

"After you," said Spiller, with what is popularly known as truly Oriental politeness; and as a parting taunt he sang out, "What about them rocks?"

"You're an ungrammatical, uneducated man," screamed Banks, dancing furiously.

But Green and Wilson waved their caps to each other. For all their way of passing compliments when one gave the other a Western Ocean relief at midnight, they were good friends.

The *Simoom* got to sea inside of forty-eight hours, for Banks lost no time. He had made up his mind to waste some on the next chance he had of looking for his blessed rocks, unless the monsoon blew too hard.

They had a fairly decent show running down the coast on the inside of the Laccadivhs, and, taking the usual circumbendibus to the eastward between Keeling and the Chagos Archipelago, picked up beautiful "passage" winds and south-east trades, and went home booming. Green found Banks a first-class 'old man,' and the *Simoom* as comfortable as a good bar-parlour, compared with the sorry old bug-haunted *Palembang*, where a man's toes got sore with the pedicuring work of cockroaches. He made up his mind to stick to her, as he evidently suited Banks. They both got cracked a little on the Simoom Rocks, and gradually talked themselves into

the belief of a shark's tooth reef a mile long with one special fang that rivalled a young peak of Teneriffe.

The *Palembang* came into Liverpool River about three weeks after the *Simoom*, and Green, back at work after ten days at home, had a high time with Wilson. But the skippers passed each other with their noses in the air as high as squirrels' tails, and never swapped a word in a fortnight.

As luck would have it, they were both for Bombay again, but to give Spiller a chance of getting there first, the *Simoom* was to call at the Cape. Just before the *Palembang* cleared, Banks and Spiller fell up against each other on the landing-stage, and as Spiller was full up to his back teeth, he broke silence and went for the upholder of the vigia in high style. He could have taken a first-class in bad language at any Australian back-blocks academy of cursing—and what they don't know in blasphemy there can only be learnt from a low-class Spaniard. So the air was blue from Liverpool to Manchester, and to the Isle of Man, and Banks got up and left. For when he was ashore he was very religious. Even at sea he carried a prayer-book and an odd volume of virulent sermons, of the kind which indicate that no man need forgive any enemy who is not of the same persuasion. But to tell the truth, Banks could have forgiven anything but an insult to his beloved rocks.

"Such a man oughtn't to live," he cried angrily, as he went off in a tremendous rage. "He's predestined to the pit!"

And he trusted that Providence might one day yield him a chance of getting even. His prayers were fervent towards that end, and if Providence



works, as it sometimes appears to do, through rum and ignorance and a good conceit in a man, there was a chance of his appeals being attended to.

On the passage out to the Cape they saw nothing of the *Palembang*. But there she was heard of as having been seen somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Agulhas Bank, having a real good time in that native home of the god of the winds, where fifty per cent. of all the breezes that do blow are gales that dance in and out and about like a cooper round a cask.

But the *Simoom* had luck, and slipped through as if Æolus never spotted her. And old Banks chortled happily, and sang an extra hymn on Sunday, compensating the men (otherwise disposed to growl at the innovation) with an extra lot of grog. For your true sailorman is the real conservative, and things that don't happen in the first week of a new ship have no business to happen afterwards—which is a hint some young second mates may find handy to remember. And remembering this will enable you to see why no true old shellback will ship in a steamboat, any more than the guard of a coach would let himself to any beastly new railroad.

The south-west monsoon had backed down to the Line about the time they crossed it; and the *Simoom* sweated up to the Maldivhs very comfortably.

"We've made a good passage—a ripping good passage," said old Banks, rubbing his hands, "and I'm condemned if I don't shape a course for my rocks, Mr. Green."

As he had been shaping for them ever since he had deliberately gone out of his way to take the route east of Madagascar, instead of the Inner or Mozam-

bique route, Green winked the other eye and said nothing. To tell the truth, he himself had a hankering to set his mind at rest on the subject, for he felt his credit involved with the skipper's.

The man at the wheel overheard what Banks said, and when he stumped for'ard the whole crew knew that the *Simoom* was looking for a needle in the Indian Ocean.

"A life's job, my bullies," said their informant. "We'll be like the crew of the *Flying Dutchman* yet."

"I'm wondering whether Spiller came ~~up~~ this way, now," said old Banks presently, with an interrogative cock of his head.

"And not by the channel?" asked Green.

Banks turned about.

"Mr. Green, may the Lord forgive me, but I just hate that Spiller with an unholy hatred. Every time he gets a show he brags he's run right over where I located my rocks, and not only that, but criss-cross in the latitude where they might be. And he set about that he'd herring-boned a course on the chart on the longitude, going back and forth on it like a dog in a turnip field. So now he'll be up here again to have another shy for it. If he saw 'em, he'd swear he never. And why he hates me so I can't tell, unless it was I did my duty once, and let him know what a God-fearing man thought of a blasphemer."

Green nodded.

"That's likely it, sir."

"So it is, so it is," cried Banks pensively; "he has no grace in him, and he set it about, I know, that I soak at sea if I'm sober ashore. He said my

rocks were delirium tremens; and I'm a discredited man, wounded in a tender spot."

It was then just four bells in the forenoon watch, and soon after they snugged her down, as the wind was very heavy in puffs and the sky low and dark. Just before eight bells Green spotted a vessel on the starboard bow, and called the old man. He came on deck like a whiteheaded Jack-in-the-Box.

"Keep her away," he cried. "I'll bet she's the *Palembang*. Shake out them reefs and hoist the main-t'gall'n's'l again."

His grammar failed in excitement.

"We're overhauling her hand over hand, anyhow," suggested Green.

"If I can pass him going two foot for his one, I'd run the *Simoom* under," screamed the skipper.

"And when we come up with him, if my voice in a trumpet can carry, I'll tell him what I think of him. He thinks I'm soft because I sing hymns on Sunday. I'll let him know before I sang hymns I was the biggest tough on the Australian coast. God's truth I was! And I wish I was now—oh, how I wish it, and him ashore with me!"

And Green believed it, because he had to. There was something in the old man's eye as he walked to and fro, an unregenerate bloodthirsty snap, that was very convincing. So the reefs were shaken out of the topsails, and even that did not satisfy the skipper.

"I'll let him know that a saved and repentant Christian isn't necessary a worm," said Banks.

"Mr. Green, set the mainsail!"

The *Simoom* was snoring through it now, and Green stared.

"What she can't carry she may drag," said the skipper, with flashing eyes.

And the *Simoom* lost her courtesy with the sea under the influence of the mainsail, for the monsoon was a stiff one. She shouldered the Indian Ocean aside like a policeman shoving through a crowd; she scooped up tons of it as a scraper team scoops sand, and ran at any extra sea like a bull at a hedge. The men were under the break of the t'gallant fo'c'sle, sheltering from the cataract. They knew the *Palembang* was ahead, and were as eager as the skipper to overhaul her. Through the bo'son and his mate it had leaked out that the old man was keen for a palaver with Spiller.

"He's like a bull whale in a flurry," said one who had been whaling. "Now my notion is that the skipper kin blaspheme if he wants to."

The *Palembang* was visibly herself and no other vessel by this time, and she carried all she could stand.

"I've half a notion to have the t'gall'n-sails set," said Banks, looking up aloft. "And if we weren't overhauling her twenty-three to the dozen, damme, but I would!"

For the *Palembang* showed nothing above her reefed topsails, and the foresail had a reef in it, and the *Simoom* came after her like the inside edge of a cyclone.

"Gimme my trumpet," cried Banks. "Mr. Green, take the wheel, and run her as close as maybe."

And the second mate stood at the main-topsail halliards.

"*Palembang* ahoy!" yelled Banks, through his trumpet as he came tearing up on the weather side of his enemy's ship.

"Where the blue blazes are you coming to?" shrieked Spiller, who was both drunk and angry.

"Passing you as if you was standing still, you low, uneducated swine," said Banks. "And I could do it under jury rig."

"What about them rocks?" jeered Spiller through his trumpet. "What's the price of vigias, you notorious old liar, you disgrace to the perfession?"

They were close alongside now, not half a cable's length apart; a good cricketer could have shied a cricket ball the distance.

"Leggo the main-topsail halliards," said Banks, and then to the surprise of his crew and the utter astonishment of Spiller he poured out a torrent of the most blood-curdling abuse which had ever defiled the Indian or any other ocean.

"You think I'm soft, you dog," he boomed through his spurt of blasphemy, "and reckon because I've got notions of decency I'm to be trod on. Run on my rocks and sink and burn."

His voice rose to a scream and cracked. He tried to speak, but tried in vain.

"Mr. Green, here," he whispered, and leaving the wheel to the man he had displaced, the mate jumped to the lee poop rail.

"Tell him he's no sailor; my voice is gone. Say he's a—oh, tell him anything you feel."

Green did so and satisfied himself and Banks and the entire crew. And then, seeing Wilson, he gave him a friendly bellow.

"What cheer, Wilson!"

And hoisting the topsails, they ran on, leaving Spiller choking with helpless rage.

As it grew darker and they dropped the *Palem-bang*, they picked up the mainsail, and shortened down for the night.

"We ain't in no hurry," whispered Banks, "and to-morrow we'll be up with my rocks, if I've hit it off right."

He was now sombre and dignified, and spoke with particular grammatical and moral accuracy. Not the ghost of a damn issued from his lips. He reproved Green for swearing, and held a service in the cabin, much to the disgust of the entire ship, as it wasn't Sunday. Perhaps to punish himself, for he always liked to stand well with the crowd, he gave them no grog after it.

In the morning he put a man on the fore-top-gallant-yard to look for his rocks, and as he gave notice that anyone who sighted them first should have five pounds, the entire watch, which should have been below snoring, sat like crows up aloft and strained their eyes all round the horizon.

At ten Banks was jovial and got his voice back. At noon he was anxious. By four o'clock he shortened sail again.

"We've overrun 'em," he said sadly. "If they're still about, we're to the west of 'em."

"Mr. Green, during the night we'll stand under easy sail to the eastward. I'm set on seeing those rocks again, if I lose a week."

And the night fell darkly.

No matter whose watch it was, mate's or second mate's, the white-whiskered skipper was on deck every ten minutes, peering into the black darkness with his glasses. The old chap's nerves were on edge; his imagination flamed; he saw reefs and pinnacles of islands every moment, and heard the boom of breakers.

When Green relieved his subordinate at midnight, the second mate whispered to him:

"The old man's as nervous as a cat. To hear him jaw you'd think the bottom of the sea was rising up. Mind you ain't high and dry on a new continent by daylight."

"We'll whack it out fair among the lot of us," said Green. "Jee-whillikins, what's that?"

He spoke suddenly, in an altered voice, and Milton jumped.

"What?"

"I thought I saw a flare to the southward."

"Lordy, you've got them too," said Milton. "Let's go ashore, and have a walk on the Apollo Bunder."

"Stow it," cried Green, and holding on to the mizzen-topgallant backstay, he jumped upon the rail.

"Look, look!" he cried, and Milton, looking, saw a faint glow to the southward—or fancied he saw it.

"Call the 'old man,'" said Green, and in two and

three-fifths seconds by any man's chronometer, Banks was on deck, and saw nothing.

"But did ye see it, man?" he yelled; "and if so, what's it mean?"

"Someone struck a match in Colombo," said the second mate irreverently. For he had sailed with Banks for years, and at times took liberties.

"I only trust to Providence that it isn't that wicked man's ship in any trouble," said the skipper viciously. "Mr. Green, we'll stand to the south'ard for a while."

"Lay aft the watch," sang out Miltofi, and they braced her up to within two points of the wind.

Both watches stayed on deck in the little excitement, and in the course of the next hour they reported all kinds of non-existent things. "Rocks on the starboard bow" were varied by "A vessel on the port bow," and a planet low down in a break of cloud was "A steamer's head-light, sir."

"Collision with Jupiter," cried Milton.

But just in the 'twixt and 'tween of earliest dawn, when the grey ghost of day walked in the east, a man up aloft sang out with startling energy:

"Two dark rocks right ahead, sir."

The maindeck hummed suddenly, and a patter of bare feet told that the entire crew had run for the fo'c'sle head. The skipper nipped into the mizzen rigging quick as a chipmunk.

"Keep her away a point or two," he cried.

"Away a point or two, sir," echoed the helmsman.



"I see 'em, Mr. Green," yelled the old chap; "and just where I figured them out to be. There'll be three, there'll be three."

He paused and looked down on Green.

"But—but two will do me," he added cautiously.

"I never pinned my faith to three."

Green climbed alongside him, and even a bit higher.

"Lord, sir, they're boats," he cried.

"No, rocks," said the skipper.

"Boats," repeated the mate obstinately.

"So they are! Damn!" cried the skipper.

And then the same verdict came from aloft, and was confirmed by the entire sea jury.

The disappointed captain dropped back on deck.

"Now, if they were the *Palembang's* boats," suggested Green.

"No such luck," said the skipper. "Is there anyone in 'em, and do they see us?"

"By the same token they see us now!" shouted Green, and in a quarter of an hour the boats were alongside, and the *Simoom* lay to.

"What boats are those?" squealed Banks.

"The *Palembang's*," replied a voice from the tumbling cockle-shells.

The skipper and the mates said "Whew!" and Banks was fairly dancing.

"And where's your ship?"

"Bottom of the Indian Ocean," said a voice that Banks recognized as Spiller's.

"Is that you, Captain Spiller?" he inquired, with much exaggerated courtesy.

"It is," growled Spiller.

"Did you by any chance come across my rocks as you sailed along so pleasant?"

Spiller swore in a muffled voice.

"Not by your description of 'em: far from it," he replied at last.

"We'll see about that," said Banks. "Now then, come under the lee quarter, and we'll have some of you aboard; the captain of the *Palembang* last."

"Whad yer mean?" cried Spiller sulkily.

"What I say," said Banks softly.

And when everyone was out of the boats but Spiller, he stood by the line.

"Now, captain, were they my rocks or not?"

"No," said Spiller.

"Then stay in your damned boat," cried Banks.

"Cast that line off, Spiller. You won't? Then cut it, Mr. Green."

Green smiled but didn't move. The skipper borrowed a knife from the nearest seaman by taking it out of its sheath.

"Now, was they or not?"

"No," cried Spiller.

"One, two, and at three I cut," said Banks.

"One—two——"

"Very well, they was, then," shrieked Spiller; and the next minute he was on deck.

"I'll have you sign a paper to that effect," said Banks, "and if you don't, the whole of your crew will, including your mate."

Wilson, who was standing by Green, said that he would willingly, and when Spiller scowled, he scowled back.

"And now, Mr. Green," cried Banks cheerfully, "since we know where they are, and can find 'em any time, you may put her on her course again. And we'll have a little thanksgiving service for all this."

He did not explain whether the service was for the established character of the Simoom Rocks, or for the rescue of the shipwrecked crew, but when he got them all below he handed round hymn books.

"First of all we will sing hymn No. 184 of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*," he said softly, and when Spiller looked it up he was very much annoyed.



THE SCUTTLING OF THE  
*PANDORA*



## THE SCUTTLING OF THE *PANDORA*

THERE are ships with good and evil reputations, independent of the men who own or sail them. Some, it would seem, had their keels laid on a lucky day, others were assuredly :

Built i' th' eclipse and rigged with curses dark.

Many have furrowed all the seas of ocean and have lost no lives, and have cost neither owner nor underwriters money. But some there are (and those who follow the sea will know them) which have never achieved a single passage without being nearly cast away, without killing or maiming men. For such a ship the very shoals themselves decrease in depth through the unlucky set of some abnormal tide: for them the "trades" begin far south and die in premature calm ten degrees from the Line. They are well built and highly classed, and yet spring leaks. Derelicts lie in wait for them; they are chased through every sea by cyclones and tornadoes. In them the luck of lucky men is finally of no avail: seamen fall from aloft in calms; the gear gives without notice; stores rot in spite of care. They break the heart of all who have to do with them: in them blood is suddenly spilt: in them strong men waste and die.

Such a ship was the *Pandora*, and, as she lay off Sandridge, at anchor in Hobson's Bay, there was not a sailorman in Australia who would have shipped in her from choice.

"I've heerd the skipper of one ship I was in talk about the nature of vessels," said Jack Marchmont, as he sat with his mate on the end of the pier, "and *he* allowed that ships was like men, launched with nat'ral dispositions. He talked a lot of scientific guff about deviation, and what he said was as ships had this or that deviation all according how their heads was p'inted on the stocks. If she p'inted sou'-west, she played quite a different game with the compass to what she would have done if she had laid nor'-east. And I believe him. The *Pandora* must have p'inted straight for hell, Joe."

"She is a bad 'un, I own," said his mate, "but it ain't a matter of ch'ice. Ships is few, and men is plenty, and it's a case of 'John, get up and let Jack sit down' with you and me. If she was a wuss ship than she is, and a wetter (though there ain't a wetter), and if she killed as many as the plague, I ain't goin' to work Tom Cox's traverse ashore any more. And there ain't no beer in the scuttle-butt neither, and Bailey looks at us as black as black. I'm goin' to ship," and Joe Bennet rose.

"I ain't got a farden to jingle of a tombstone," he said.

"Mark me," said Jack gloomily, "you'll never have no tombstone if we ships in the *Pandora*. 'Tain't her way to run any man's relatives into *that* expense."



But Joe shrugged his shoulders.

"Mebbe this trip'll break her luck; and you've got to ship along. 'Cause why? We've on'y one chest atween the two of us. Cheer up, old son. Why, I'd ship in the *Leander*, and they say she killed and drowned seventy men in five years. Blow me, I've got to the p'int that I'd ship in a bloody diving-bell!"

And three days later the two men, with twelve others who were just as deep in debt to the boarding-house keepers, signed on in the *Pandora*, bound for London. They went on board that very night. The mates kept a keen eye on them: they knew the ship's reputation, and more than once men who had come on board at night had disappeared by the morning. The first few hours in any ship, as in any other kind of work, are the most trying, and the first sight of a damp and empty fo'c'sle is for ever discouraging. For all the *Pandora's* crowd from London had "skipped" in Melbourne.

"And right they was," said more than one of the new crowd, "for one of them was killed, and two was drowned, and another will walk lame for the rest of his life."

But when the sun came up over the low Brown hills to the eastward, and the daylight danced upon the landlocked waters of the great bay, they turned to with more cheerful hearts. The summer had spent two of its golden months, but the sky was clear, and a warm north wind blew. The ship was clean, and yet not too clean. It did not suggest the interminable intolerable labour of an American ship, all brass and bright-work. And as

the new crew hove up the anchor they found the windlass was no heart-breaker.

"Give it her, boys," said the mate, and they slapped the brakes up and down with a will.

"I reckon the crowd aft are pretty decent," said Joe, as he jumped up aloft to loosen the fore-top-sail. "Oh, I dessay she ain't 'arf bad."

And as the crew allowed, there was little to complain of about the way the *Pandora* was found.

"She ain't like our last ship," was Joe's comment. "Every time she 'it a sea out o' the common she'd shake shearpoles off of 'er, as a dog shakes water."

But Jack Marchmont was not consoled.

"I ain't denyin' that the owners and the 'old man' do their best," he said, "but if they rove silk gear and bent silk sails, they'd not alter the nature of her. I'll feel safe when I grinds gravel under my heels, and not till then."

They told each other dolorous tales of the ship when they ate, and in the second dog-watch, which was all their own. And yet the wind was fair and put them through Bass's Strait, and well to the south and east, day by day.

"It's too good to last," said Jack.

Aft, much the same feeling existed, though no one knew it for'ard. Yet Captain Rayner was a melancholy man, and seemed very soft to those whom luck had ever sent to sea with American ship-masters. He had sailed three voyages in the *Pandora* and had read the burial service every passage. Once he had read it to the devouring sea, as a grave, when five men had gone at once from the fo'c'sle head; but he

never spoke of the ship and her ways, even if he always came on deck with the air of a man who expects bad news. Though he never knew it, his look at last got upon the men's nerves. But their nerve was shaken from the first; superstition had hold of them. They called him "Jonah."

"It's a black look out with such a skipper," said some, and though the evil history of the *Pandora* ran far back beyond Rayner's time, they attributed her present ill-luck to him.

The mind of the seaman is a limited mind. He is a child, a creature of arrested development. The infinite sameness of the sea, its usual dullness and appalling lack of interest, do not move him to growth. The romance of it is for those who know it not, or for those who pass beyond the borders of its great roads of travel. For the merchant seaman the ocean is a method of toil; only disaster or the fear of it gives it savour. And the work is the same for ever. They dwell on little things, are easily pleased, easily hurt. In such minds grows superstition, in such panic fears flourish if they are not held in a strong hand. Though both the mates were good men, they were young, and Rayner was weak.

The very fairness of the weather, though fair weather is common enough off the Horn in summer, got on the crew's minds, when they came in sight of the Diego Ramirez Islands and presently hauled up for the north.

"None of us ever passed these 'ere Daggar-marmines in weather like this," they said, as they shook their heads. "Why, it might be a mill-pond!"

And when, three days later, a change of weather sent a south-west gale howling after them, they shook their heads again.

" Ah, she's goin' to get it now. This'll make up for it. Who's goin' first? "

They found out now what the *Pandora* could do to make their lives unhappy. She was both weatherly and fast, but her lines for'ard were such that she never rose to any sea she struck till green water poured over the topgallant fo'c'sle two feet deep. She shipped one sea at midnight that ripped off the scuttle-hatch and poured solid water into the fo'c'sle that washed the men out of the lower bunks. The hatch went overboard, and it was morning before anyone dared go on the fo'c'sle head to spike planks down in place of it. All night long a cataract poured down on them, and water spurted in through the plugged hawse pipes. Soon there was not a dry blanket in their den; steam rose from the wet-packed sleepers. It was " all hands " at four bells in the middle watch, and they went on deck to shorten sail. Not a man wore oilskins; they had nothing to keep from getting wet. Even Joe, who was the most cheerful man for'ard, fell to growling.

" Call this a ship? " he said. " She's scared of the top of the sea and wants to dive so's to get out o' the wet. Stow the foresail, is it? I reckon the old man is goin' to heave her to while he can. He can't have much heart to do it with a fair wind."

And perhaps Rayner had little heart. But if he had little, the mate was cheery enough. He bellowed loudly, and the men jumped.

" Now then, haul taut the lifts," he roared.

"That'll do. Weather clew-garnet! Ease off the sheet a bit!"

They slacked away the tack and hauled up the weather-gear.

"Now then, lee-gear, and jump aloft and furl it."

The night was black and the wind heavy in increasing squalls. Even with the foresail hanging in the gear, and bellying out in great white bladders, she still cut the seas like a knife, and scooped the seas in over her head. Blankets and bags washed out on deck, for there was no door to the men's quarters, only a heavy canvas screen from the break of the fo'c'sle. And from aloft dull foam gleamed as the *Pandora* drove the seas asunder. The men sprang into the weather-rigging with the second mate leading. As he came to the futtock shrouds, he laid hold of the foremost shroud with his right hand, and jumped for the band of the yard-truss. His foot slipped and his hand-hold gave. He snatched with a yell at the topgallant sheet leading through the top, but was too late to grasp and hold it.

"By God, the *Pandora's* luck," said the men in the rigging as they heard him reach the deck. And when the foresail was stowed and they went down they heard the man was dead. They found the *Pandora* made heavy weather still, when she was brought to the wind, and she only lay to decently when she was stripped to the goose-winged maintop-sail. The men went into their wet and devastated den in gloomy silence.

"'Ere's a bloomin' pretty general average," said Joe, as he found his chest, which was also his chum's, staved in by the impact of an iron-bound one which

had fetched away from its lashings. But no one growled, and no one answered him. The young second "greaser" had been liked by them. They sat and smoked in gloomy silence, and only half of the watch below turned into the driest bunks. They thought that the *Pandora* had begun, and though she lay to easily enough, few slept. They were afraid of their ship; she was unlucky, accursed, an evil personality. About her was the odour of death.

"Case was a good boy," they said, "and would have been a fine officer by-and-by. Well, our turn next."

Every time the *Pandora* bowed a wave the hawse-holes still spurted; the fo'c'sle deck ran wet and glimmered darkly in the feeble light from the stinking lanterns swinging on both port and starboard sides. The air was saturated with moisture, rank sweat ran down the beams, dripping blankets swayed from the edges of unoccupied bunks; the men were damp, subdued, unhappy. Now, as the ship lay to, the wind no longer swept into the fo'c'sle under the flapping screen by the windlass, but still eddies of swift cold air shook it, and the men shivered under their oil-skins, that they wore now for warmth.

"I wish I'd never seed her," said Jack Marchmont, and Joe did not answer his mate. Not ten words were spoken till the wheel and look-out were relieved at four o'clock. Both were idle jobs, for the night was still as dark as death, and the wheel with a grummet over its spokes looked after itself.

"Oh, it's all solid comfort, this is," said Jack. "I wonder, whose wet clothes will be for sale next?"

They buried the second mate in the grey waste of

sea before they put the *Pandora* before the moderating gale. The mate read the burial service, for Captain Rayner stayed below. The steward told the men in a whisper that he was ill.

"He's all broke up," he said, "I seed him cryin' like a child. And no wonder; this is a wicked ship. I wish I'd left her in Melbourne."

And some of the men frowned. They did not like to hear him call the *Pandora* wicked. For the ship was, in its way, alive; it was possessed. They wished to propitiate it; superstition had them by the throat.

But they were easier when the body was committed to the deep. And the mate assumed a more cheerful air when he had carried the Prayer Book into his berth and came on deck again. They put the ship before the wind and loosed the foresail. But though the wind had taken off, the sea was very heavy, and the *Pandora* wallowed riotously. She took in seas over both rails. Thrice that day she filled the main-deck, and but for the life-lines rigged right from the fo'c'sle to the poop many men would have been washed overboard. As she ran with the wind on the port quarter, she sometimes dived as if she would never come up. The galley fire was out, and could not be lighted; the men drank water and ate biscuit.

"Hogs, dogs, and sailors," they said. Every time the vessel dived they held their breath.

The mate had a hard time, for Rayner was too ill to work, and she carried no apprentices. Forward there was no one capable of an officer's work; there was no broken skipper whom drink had destroyed, no young fellow with a second mate's "ticket." So Mr. Gamgee practically slept on deck

in snatches till he slept almost as he stood under the weather-cloth in the mizzen rigging. He prayed for moderate weather, for a sight of the sun. But though the gale was less, it still blew hard, and the sky was black and the racing scud low, and the sun was not seen by day or a star by night. On the third day Gamgee staggered as he walked.

"If the old man can't come on deck soon I'll have to cave in," he thought. He shook his fist at the ship. "I wish I'd never seen her. She's a man-killer."

That night when the starboard watch was called at twelve the wind took off suddenly, and the *Pandora* pounded in the wallow of the sea like a bull-buffalo in a bog. She shipped seas over both rails; the racing waves astern came and slapped their crests at the man at the wheel; she scooped up the sea forward every stagger she made. She had been running under the reefed foresail and the fore and main top-sails close reefed. Now they shook the reefs out. Gamgee was alert and alive, but his nerves half-betrayed him. He jumped from the poop to the main-deck, and back again. He wanted to be mate and second mate and skipper too. And as the fresh canvas took hold of her, she slapped at the rising sea, dived into it, and as the wind bellowed almost as keen as ever, the man at the wheel lost his nerve, gave her too much helm, snatched at her, gave her too much again, and almost broached her to. And then the mate was again on the main-deck.

Someone heard him say "O God!" as the Atlantic fell on board; but no one ever heard him say anything again.



The water filled her from rail to rail. She shuddered, and then lifted slowly, and as she ran once more before the wind and rolled, she poured out the sea on either side. The main-deck ports were burst outward, the gear floated in inextricable tangles, a four-hundred-gallon tank, lashed under the poop ladders, broke from its lashings and took charge of the deck. In the black darkness and the imminent danger men cried out. Some cried to their mates and were answered, some were not answered. With the mate three other men had gone.

And then she cleared herself once more, and the watch came together under the break of the poop. Joe asked for Jack Marchmont; but Jack had saved anyone from the expense of a tombstone.

"And I over-persuaded 'im to ship in her. Oh, she's a bloody ship."

Then one man said:

"Where's Mr. Gamgee?"

Joe ran up to the poop.

"Mr. Gamgee! sir!"

"He ain't here," said the man at the wheel.

"Oh, Joe, what is it?"

"'Twas your doin'," cried Joe. "There's two gone, and Jack with 'em, and Mr. Gamgee!"

And the man at the wheel fell all ashake. His face was ashy in the feeble glimmer of the binnacle light.

"Come and take her, Joe," he implored. "Oh, the swine she is. I'm in a tremble, Joe. She's too much for me."

And tragedy heaped itself on tragedy. The steward came on deck, and heard that the mate was

gone. He lost his head and ran in to the captain crying; he was ludicrous, horrible, speechless. And Rayner sat up in his bunk, and fell back without knowing what had happened. He never knew, for though the steward shook him feebly, his failing heart had failed, and brandy never brought him to. The steward ran on deck blubbering.

"I believe the captain's dead," he sobbed.

And the two boldest of the men took off their caps and went into the cabin humbly. A greater than their commander was there. They stood in silence, fiddling with their caps, and stared at the quiet white face upon its pillow.

"Oh yes, he's dead," they whispered. They backed out respectfully; they were stunned, and were adrift; they were all masterless men; authority had been removed; they faced the unknown with dread. They saw now that they had rested on others' knowledge. What did they know of the sea after all?

They gathered on the poop.

"What?" said Joe, who was at the wheel.  
"Him gone too. And we——"

They all understood. They were in peculiar isolation, in danger. And what would be said if they saved themselves and the ship?

"'Twill look as if we'd mutinied," said Joe. But he had a touch of natural authority in him. "As soon as it gets light we'll write out a true account of it and sign it, all of us. And we'll make for the nearest port."

They were all quiet men, Englishmen and Dutchmen, and there was no more drink in the ship than

that in the medicine chest. The steward drank what remained of it. And in the morning all the remainder of the crew met on the poop. At first they had a certain natural reluctance to use that portion of the ship, but if they did not meet there the man at the wheel could not take his share in the talk. But Joe did most of the talking.

"I reckon the nearest port is Buenos Ayres," he said. "This mornin' I took the liberty of lookin' at the chart, and there ain't nothin' 'andier as is common talk with sailormen. If we stand north we'll about 'it it off; or any ways, we'll 'it on the track of steamers makin' for it, and we might get the lend of a hoffer to take us in. What do you say, mates?"

Some nodded, some shrugged their shoulders, and some said, "Buenos Ayres? Oh yes, that'll do as well as another."

"And I've took the liberty," said Joe solemnly, "of borrowin' the log-book from down below, and I've wrote out a plain account of all this 'ere, as I said last night. For it's best put down, and it's ships' law as everythin' serious should be wrote out in the log-book, and nowheres else. Shall I read it?"

And he read out what he had written :

"Three day's back, as told in the log, Mr. Case, the second mate, fell from the foreyard as we was goin to take in the foresail, and was killed. He was buried accordin the next day, while we was ove to. And last night in the middle watch, as all ands was makin sail, the wind avin fallen light sudden and

the sea bein very eavy, we shipped an eavy sea over the port rail as washed Mr. Gamjy overboard with Jack Marchmont, A.B., Andrew Anderson, A.B., and Thomas Griggs, boy. And the captain bein ill, as the log says, died sudden on earing it, and is now lyin dead in is cabin. Whereas, there bein no officer in the ship, all ands assembled as aforesaid, declares this is the truth, the ole truth, and nothin but the truth, so elp us Gawd. And we intends makin for bonus airs, or monty Vidyo."

And one by one the crew signed this simple statement, as it was held down on the top of the signal locker by its author. Those who could not write—and there were three who could not—made their marks when Joe signed for them.

"Whatever 'appens to this blasted 'ooker, we must keep 'old of this log," said Joe. "For supposin' any hother disaster befell us, as seems likely enough, and we took to the boats, it would look very bad for us, without a single officer."

It was a cold and unhappy day for them as they drove to the north-east, still under short canvas. But the weather broke a little, and they set the topgallant-sails at last.

"So long as we don't pile her up on the Falklands we should do," said the one other man on board beside Joe who seemed capable of taking responsibility. He was from Newcastle, and was, of course, known as Geordie. Naturally enough he and Joe divided the watches between them, and the remainder of the crowd sheltered uneasy minds under their strength.

"I suppose if we bring her in we might get something extra," said Geordie, the day they buried the captain.

But Joe took him by the arm and led him for'ard from the wheel, at which a patient Swede stood.

"Geordie, old man, do you want to bring her in?" he asked.

"Why, yes, I suppose so," said Geordie. He stared at Joe. "What do you mean?"

Joe broke out strangely and struck his fist upon the rail.

"I want to see 'er sink," he said savagely. "I want to see 'er go where she's put so many good men. What right 'as we to save 'er to do more 'arm? It ain't alone as she drowned my chum or the others, but she 'as a black record that ain't finished unless we finish it. She's strong, and will go on killin' for twenty years, Geordie. She'll make money for them as doesn't care, but what of the likes of us?"

He was greatly moved.

"She's caulked with men's lives, and painted with their blood!" he cried passionately. "I'd rather she sunk with me than sailed the seas any more."

And Geordie fidgeted uneasily.

"That's true, mate, but——"

"Aye," said Joe, "I know. If we scuttled 'er 'twould look bad, and it's bad enough as it is; but 'tis a good deed, if we done it, and it should be done, and I'll tell you 'ow to do it."

He leant upon the rail and spoke earnestly, in a low voice.

"It won't do, I own, to scuttle 'er at sea, not even

if we let on she leaked and logged it day by day. But if we sunk 'er in the Plate or in the bay at Monte Video, 'twould do right enough, and I've a plan for that. I made it out in the morning watch. 'Tis as easy as eatin', and easier a deal than eatin' ship's biscuit. Down below in the lazareet I'll bore 'oles in her, three or four, and plug 'em on the inside, about a foot below the water-line. And I'll over the side and plug 'em outside, then I'll draw the inside plugs. D'ye see? "

And Geordie saw.

" You needn't know it. I can do it my lone," said Joe. " And do it I will. If we gets off 'er safe she shan't kill no more. When we're out of her—and none of us will stay, as *you* know—she'll lie at anchor waitin' for a new crowd, and I'll come out to her in a boat and sink the murderin' old 'ooker right there."

" There'll be a ship-keeper on her," said Geordie.

" As like as not 'e'll on'y be a Spaniard," replied Joe simply. " And even if not——"

Even if not, one more was but one.

The next day the weather moderated, and the *Pandora*, being then, as they reckoned, well clear of the Falklands, stood due north for Cape Corrientes with the wind almost on the port beam. That night Joe went down into the lazaret with an auger, and bored three holes in her weather side.

" Good stuff and sound," he said, as he sweated over his task. " She might 'ave floated for hever."

When he drew out his auger he found that the sea raced past the hole and sometimes flipped water into it.

"On a level keel she'll have 'em about two foot under," he said. He plugged that hole and bored two others. When he had plugged these, he went on deck again. There was not a soul awake on her but Geordie and the man at the wheel. She was going now very sweetly, and making ten knots: they were running into fair weather. But she lay over far enough to make it easy for Joe to go over the side, while Geordie slacked him down from a pin in the rail.

"It's done," said Joe, as he came on board. "She'll kill no more."

It seemed to him that he was doing a good deed, for the *Pandora* was cruel.

And a week later, though they had sighted no land, the colour of the water had changed curiously, and looked a little reddish. When they drew some on board it was evidently not as salt as the sea, and they knew they were in the flood of the mighty Plate. The airs were now light and westerly; they hauled their wind and stood for the north-west. But still the man on the look-out on the main-royal-yard saw no land. In the afternoon they sighted the smoke of a steamer heading about west by south on their starboard beam. They laid their main-topsail to the mast and hoisted the Jack, union down.

That night they were at anchor off Monte Video, and in the morning they told their story to the British Consul. But one and all refused at any price and at all costs to go on board of the *Pandora* again. Joe spoke for all of them.

"We'll go to gaol sooner, sir," he said, as he stepped in front of his mates, twiddling his cap

nervously, " though we wishes to say so respectfully, sir. She's a man-killer, and it's better a sight to be in the jug, or on the beach, than to be drowned. She's killed my own mate, and more than 'im. And so far back as hany of us ever 'eard of 'er, she's been at the same job. If you please, sir, we'd rather go to gaol."

They slept that night ashore, but not in gaol, and next day the owners cabled from England for a new crew to be shipped in her at any price. But no price could induce men to go in her. And on the third night she sank at her moorings in fifteen fathoms of water, and carried her ship-keeper to the bottom.

"I told you she'd kill another man yet," said Geordie.

But Joe shook his head.

"I done what was right. And after all, 'e was on'y a Spaniard, as I said."



**THE PROMOTION OF THE  
ADMIRAL**



# THE PROMOTION OF THE ADMIRAL

## PART I

MR. SMITH, who ran a sailors' boarding-house in that part of San Francisco known as the Barbary Coast, was absolutely *sui generis*. If any drunken scallawag of a scholar, who had drifted ashore on his boarding-house mud-flats, had ventured in a moment of alcoholic reminiscence to say so in the classic tongue, Shanghai Smith would have "laid him out cold" with anything handy, from a stone-ware matchbox to an empty bottle. But if that same son of culture had used his mother tongue, as altered for popular use in the West, and had murmured: "Jerusalem, but Mr. Smith's the daisy of all!" Smith would have thrown out his chest and blown through his teeth a windy oath and guessed he was just so.

"Say it and mean it, that's me," said Smith "I'm all right. But call me hog and I *am* hog; don't you forget it!"

Apparently all the world called him "hog." For that he was no better than one, whether he walked, or ate, or drank, or slept, was obvious to any sailor with an open eye. But he was hard and rough and tough, and had the bull-headed courage of a mad

steer combined with the wicked cunning of a monkey.

"Don't never play upon me," he said often. "For 'get even' is my motter. There ain't many walkin' this earth that can say they bested me, not from the time I left Bristol in the old dart till now, when I'm known the wide world over."

So far as ships and sailormen were concerned he certainly spoke the truth. He was talked of with curses in the Pacific from the Prybiloffs to the Horn, from San Francisco to Zanzibar. It was long odds at any given time in any longitude that some seaman was engaged in blaspheming Shanghai Smith for sending him on board drunk and without a chest, and with nothing better to propitiate his new shipmates with than a bottle of vinegar and water that looked like rum till it was tasted. Every breeze that blew, trade wind or monsoon, had heard of his iniquities. He got the best of everyone.

"All but one," said Smith in a moment of weakness, when a dozen men, who owed so much money that they crawled to him as a Chinaman does to a joss, were hanging upon his lips—"all but one."

"Oh, we don't take that in," said one of the most indebted; "we can 'ardly believe that, Mr. Smith."

Sometimes this unsubtle flattery would have ended in the flatterer being thrown out. But Smith was now gently reminiscent.

"Yes, I was done brown and never got the best of one swine," said the boarding-house keeper. "I don't ask you to believe it, for I own it don't sound likely, me being what I am. But there was one

swab as give me a hidin', and he give it me good, so he did."

He looked them over malignantly.

"I kin lick any of you here with one hand," he swore, "but the man as bested me could have taken on three of you with both hands. And I own I was took aback considerable when I run against him on the pier at Sandridge when I was in Australia fifteen years ago. He was a naval officer, captain of the *Warrior*, and dressed up to kill, though he had a face like a figurehead cut out of mahog'ny with a broad-axe. And I was feelin' good and in need of a scrap. So when he bumped agin me, I shoved him over—prompt, I shoved him. Dowd he went, and the girls that know'd me laughed. And two policemen came along quick. I didn't care much, but this naval josser picks himself up and goes to 'em. Would you believe it, but when he'd spoke a bit I seed him donate them about a dollar each and they walked off round a heap of dunnage on the wharf, and the captain buttoned up his coat and came for me. I never seen the likes of it. He comes up dancin' and smilin', and he kind of give me half a bow, polite as you like, and inside of ten seconds I knew I'd struck a cyclone, right in the spot where they breed. I fought good—(you know me)—and I got in half a dozen on his face. But I never fazed him none, and he wouldn't bruise mor'n hittin' a boiler. And every time he got back on me I felt as if I'd been kicked. He scarred me something cruel. I could see it by the blood on his hands. 'Twarn't his, by a long sight, for his fists was made of teak, I should say. And in the

end, when I seemed to see a ship's company of naval officers around me, one of them hit me under the ear and lifted me up. And another hit me whilst I was in the air, and a third landed me as I fell. And that was the end of it, so far's I remember. When I came to, which was next day in a kind of sailors' hospital, I reached up for a card over my head, and I read 'concussion of the brain' on it. What's more, I believed it. If the card had let on that I'd been run over by a traction engine and picked up dead, I'd have believed it. And when I reely came to my senses, a med'cal student says as Captain Richard Dunn, of the *Warrior*, had bin to inquire when the funeral was, so's he could send a wreath. They said he was the topside fighter in the hull British Navy. And I'm here to say he was."

He breathed fierce defiance and invited any man alive to tell him he was lying.

"And you never got even?" asked the bar-tender, seeing that no one took up the challenge.

"Never set eyes on him from that day to this," said his boss regretfully.

"And if you did?"

Smith paused, took a drink.

"So help me, I'd shanghai him if he was King of England!"

And one of the crowd, who had put down the *San Francisco Chronicle* in order to hear this yarn, picked it up again.

"S'elp me," he said, in a breathless excitement, "'ere's a bally cohincidence. 'Ere's a telegram from 'Squimault,' saying as how the flagship *Triumphant*,

Hadmiral Sir Richard Dunn, K.C.B., is comin' down to San Francisco! "

" Holy Moses, let's look! " said Shanghai Smith.

He read, and a heavenly smile overspread his hard countenance. He almost looked good, such joy was his.

" Tom," he said to the bar-tender, " set up the drinks for the crowd. This is my man, for sure. And him an admiral, too! Holy sailor, ain't this luck? "

He went out into the street and walked to and fro rubbing his hands, while the men inside took their drink, and looked through the uncleaned windows at the boss.

" Holy Mackinaw," said Billy, who had drifted West from Michigan, " I reckon never to hev seen Mr. Smith so pleased since he shipped a crowd in the *Harvester*, and got 'em away that night and shipped 'em in the *Silas K. Jones*."

" He's struck a streak o' luck in his mind," said one of the seamen; " and it's this 'ere hadmiral. Now mark me, mates, I wouldn't be that 'ere hadmiral for the worth of California. Mr. Sir Blooming Hadmiral, K.C.B., et setterer, is going to 'ave a time."

He shook his head over the melancholy fate of a British admiral.

" Rot! " said one of the younger men; " 'tain't possible to do nothin' to the likes of an admiral. Now, if 'twas a lieutenant or even a captain; I'm not sayin' as Mr. Smith mightn't do somethin'. But an admiral——"

" You mark me," said the older man, " I'd rather

be as green as grass and ship as an able-bodied seaman with Billy Yates of the *Wanderer*, than be in that hadmiral's shoes. What do you say, Tom? "

Tom filled himself up a drink and considered.

"Wa'al," he answered after a long pause, "it's my belief that it won't necessary be *all* pie to be an admiral if the boss is half the man he used to be. For you see 'tis quite evident he has a special kind of respect for this admiral, and when Mr. Smith has been done by anyone that he respects, he don't ever forget. Why, you know yourselves that if one of you was to do him, he'd forgive you right off after he'd kicked the stuffing out of you."

This clear proof that Mr. Smith did not respect them and was kind was received without a murmur. And as the boss did not return, the tide of conversation drifted in the narrower, more personal, channels of the marvels that had happened in the "last ship." And in the meantime H.M.S. *Triumphant*, known familiarly on the Pacific coast station as "the *Nonsuch*, two decks and no bottom," was bringing Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Dunn, K.C.B., to his fate in San Francisco.

"Was there ever such luck—was there ever such luck?" murmured Mr. Shanghai Smith. "To think of him turnin' up, all of his own accord, on my partic'lar stampin' ground! And I'll lay odds he's clean forgot me. I'll brighten up his mem'ry with sand and canvas and souji-mouji, so I will! Holy sailor, was there ever such luck?"

The morning of the following day H.M.S. *Triumphant* lay at her anchors off Saucelito in San



Francisco Bay, and was glad to be there. For this was in the times when the whole British fleet was not absolutely according to Cocker. She leaked not a little and she rolled a great deal, and she would not mind her helm except upon those occasions when the officer in charge of the deck laid his money and his reputation on her going to starboard when, according to all rules, she should have altered her course to port. But though she was a wet ship with a playful habit of trying to scoop the Pacific Ocean dry, and though her tricks would have broken the heart of the Chief Naval Constructor had he seen her at them, she was the flagship in spite of her conduct, because at that time she was half the whole Pacific Squadron. The other half was lying outside Esquimaux Dry Dock waiting for it to be finished. And when the *Chronicle* said that " Dicky Dunn " was the admiral, it had not lied. If any of that paper's reporters had known " Dicky " as his men knew him, he would have spread himself in a column on the admiral's character and personal appearance.

" He's the dead-spit of a bo'son's mate, to be sure," said the crew of the *Triumphant* when they received him at Esquimaux. " An 'ard nut he looks ! "

And a " hard nut " he certainly was. Though he stood five feet nine in height, he looked two inches less, for he was as broad as a door and as sturdy as the fore-bitts. His complexion was the colour of the sun when it sets in a fog for fine weather : the skin on his hands shone and was as scaly as a lizard's hide. His teeth were white and his eyes piercing. He could roar like a fog-horn, and sing, as the crew

said, "like any hangel." There wasn't the match of "Dicky" on any of the seas the wide world over. The only trouble was that he looked so much like the traditional sailor and buccaneer that no one could believe he was anything higher than a warrant officer at the most when he had none of his official gear about him.

Though the admiral did not know it, one of the very first to greet him when he set his foot on dry land at the bottom of Market Street was the man he had licked so thoroughly fifteen years before in Melbourne.

"Oh, it's the same," said Smith to his chief runner, who was about the "hardest case" in California. "He ain't changed none. Just so old he was when he set about me. Why, the galoot might be immortal. Mark him, now; will you know him anywhere?"

"It don't pay me ever to forget," replied the runner. He had to remember the men who owed him grudges.

"Then don't forget this one," said Smith. "Do you find me a considerate boss?"

"Oh, well——" said the runner ungraciously.

"You've got to do a job for me, Billy."

"And what?"

"I'm goin' to have this hyer admiral shipped before the stick in the toughest ship that's about ready to go to sea," replied Smith.

Billy flinched.

"Sir, it's the penitentiary!"

"I don't care if it's lynchin'," said Smith. "Help—or get. I'm bossin' this job. Which is it?"

And Billy, seeing that he was to play second fiddle, concluded to help.

"And," he said to himself, "if we get nailed I'll split. Calls himself a 'considerate boss.' Well, Shanghai Smith *has* a gall!"

"Which do you reckon is the worst ship inside the Gate now?" asked Smith, after he had savoured his cunning revenge for a few minutes.

"The *Harvester* ain't due for a month, sir."

Smith looked melancholy.

"No, she ain't, that's a fact. It's a solid pity. Sant would have suited this Dunn first class." He was the most notorious blackguard of a shipmaster yet unhung, and the fact that Smith and he were bitter enemies never blinded Shanghai to the surpassing merits of his brutality.

"There's the *Cyrus G. Hake*."

Smith shook his head contemptuously.

"D'ye think I want to board this admiral at the Palace Hotel? Why, Johnson hasn't hurt a man serious for two trips."

"Oh, well, I thought as he'd sure break out soon," said Bill; "but there's the *President*. They do say that her new mate is a holy terror."

"I won't go on hearsay," said Smith decidedly. "I want a good man you and I know—one that'll handle this Dicky Dunn from the start. Now, what's in the harbour with officers that can lick me?"

"Well, I always allowed (as you know, Smith) that Simpson of the *California* was your match."

Smith's face softened.

"Well, mebbe he is."

At any other time he would never have admitted it.

"And the *California* will sail in three days."

"Righto," said Smith. "Simpson is a good tough man and so is old Blaker. Bill, the *California* will do. But it's an almighty pity the *Harvester* ain't here. I never knew a more unlucky thing. But we must put up with the next best."

"But how'll you corral the admiral, sir?" asked Bill.

"You leave that to me," replied his boss. "I've got a very fruitful notion as will fetch him if he's half the man he was."

Next evening Smith found occasion to run across a couple of the *Triumphant's* crew, and he got them to come into his house for a drink.

"Are these galoots to be dosed and put away?" asked the bar-tender.

"Certainly not," said Smith. "Fill 'em up with good honest liquor at my expense."

The bar-tender hardly knew where good honest liquor was to be found in that house, but he gave the two men-o'-war's men the slowest poison he had, and they were soon merry.

"Is the admiral as dead keen on fightin' with his fists as he was?" asked Smith.

"Rather," said the first man.

"Oh no, he's tired," said the second. "'E allows 'e can't find no one to lick 'im. 'E never could."

"Oh, that's his complaint, is it?" said Smith. "And is he as good as he was?"

"I heerd him tell the first luff on'y the other

day as 'e reckoned to be a better man now than he was twenty years ago. And I believes 'im. 'Ard? Oh my! I do believe if 'e ran agin a lamp-post he'd fight through it."

It was enough for Smith to know that the admiral was still keen on fighting. To draw a man like that would not be so difficult. When he had turned the two naval seamen into the street, he called for the runner.

"Have you found out what I told you?"

"Yes," replied Bill. "He mostly comes down and goes off at eleven."

"Is he alone?"

"Mostly he has a young chap with him. I reckon they calls him the flag-lootenant; a kind of young partner he seems to be. But that's the only one so far. And the *California* sails day after ter-morrer, bright and early."

"Couldn't be better," said Smith. "After waitin' all these years I can't afford to lose no time. Thish-yer racket comes off to-night. Look out, Mr. Bully Admiral! I'm on your track."

And the trouble did begin that night.

Mr. "Say-it-and-mean-it" Smith laid for Admiral Sir Richard Dunn, K.C.B., etc. etc., from ten o'clock till half-past eleven, and he was the only man in the crowd that did not hope the victim would come down with too many friends to be tackled.

"It's a penitentiary job, so it is," said Bill. And yet when the time arrived his natural instincts got the better of him.

The admiral came at last: it was about a quarter to twelve, and the whole water-front was remarkably

quiet. The two policemen at the entrance to the Ferries had by some good luck, or better management, found it advisable to take a drink at Johnson's, just opposite. And the admiral was accompanied by no one but his flag-lieutenant.

"That's him," said Smith. "I'd know the beggar anywhere. Now keep together and sing!"

He broke into "Down on the Suwanee River," and advanced with Bill and Bill's two mates right across the admiral's path. They pretended to be drunk, and as far as three were concerned, there was not so much pretence about it after all. But Smith had no intention of being the first to run athwart the admiral's hawse. When he came close enough, he shoved the youngest man right into his arms. The admiral jumped back, and landed that unfortunate individual a round-arm blow that nearly unshipped his jaw. The next moment everyone was on the ground, for Bill sand-bagged the admiral just as he was knocked down by the lieutenant. As Sir Richard fell, he reached out and caught Smith by the ankle. The boarding-house master got the lieutenant by the coat and brought him down too. And as luck would have it, the youngster's head hit the admiral's with such a crack that both lay unconscious.

"Do we want the young 'un too?" asked Bill, when he rose to his feet, swinging his sandbag savagely. And Smith for once lost his head.

"Leave the swine, and puckarow the admiral," he said. And indeed it was all they could do to carry Sir Richard without exciting any more attention than four semi-intoxicated men would as they took home a mate who was quite incapacitated.

But they did get him home to the house in the Barbary Coast. When he showed signs of coming to, he was promptly dosed and his clothes were taken off him. As he slept the sleep of the drugged, they put on a complete suit of rough serge toggery and he became "Tom Deane, A.B."

"They do say that he is the roughest, toughest, hardest nut on earth," said Bill; "so we'll see what like he shapes in the *California*. I dessay he's one of that lot that lets on how sailormen have an easy time. It's my notion the *California* will cure him of that."

By four o'clock in the morning, Tom Deane, who was, as his new shipmates allowed, a hard-looking man who could, and would, pull his weight, lay fast asleep in a forward bunk of the *California's* fo'c'sle as she was being towed through the Golden Gate. And his flag-lieutenant was inquiring in hospital what had become of the admiral, and nobody could tell him more than he himself knew. So much he told the reporters of the *Chronicle* and the *Morning Call*, and, while flaring headlines announced the disappearance of a British admiral, the wires and cables fairly hummed to England and the world generally. At the same time the San Francisco police laid every water-front rat and tough by the heels on the chance that something might be got out of one of them.

"What did I tell you?" asked Bill in great alarm, as he saw several intimate friends of his being escorted to gaol.

"Are you weakenin' on it?" said Smith savagely. "If I thought you was, I'd murder you. Give me away, and when I get out, I'll chase you three times round the world and knife you, my son."

And though Bill was so much of a "terror," he could not face Smith's eyes.

"Well, I ain't in it, anyhow," he swore.

But certainly "Tom Deane, A.B.," was in it, and was having a holy time.

When the admiral woke, which he did after half an hour's shaking administered in turns by three of the *California's* crew, who were anxious to know where he had stowed his bottle of rum, he was still confused with the "dope" given him ashore. So he lay pretty still and said:

"Send Mr. Selwyn to me."

But Selwyn was his flag-lieutenant, and was just then the centre of interest to many reporters.

"Send hell; rouse out, old son, and turn to," said one of his new mates. And the admiral rose and rested on his elbow.

"Where am I?"

"On board the *California*, to be sure."

"I'm dreaming," said the admiral, "that's what it is. To be sure, I'm dreaming."

There was something in his accent as he made this statement that roused curiosity in the others.

"No—you ain't—not much," said the first man who had spoken; "and even if you was, I guess Simpson will wake you. Rouse up before he comes along again. He was in here an hour back inquiring for the trumpet of the Day of Judgment to rouse you. Come along, Deane! Now then!"

"My name's Dunn," said the admiral, with contracted brows.

"Devil doubt it," said his friend; "and who done you? Was it Shanghai Smith?"



The admiral sat up suddenly, and by so doing brought his head into violent contact with the deck above him. This woke him thoroughly, just in time to receive Mr. Simpson, mate of the *California*, who came in like a cyclone to inquire after his health.

"Did you ship as a dead man?" asked Mr. Simpson, "for if you did, I'll undeceive you."

And with that he yanked the admiral from his bunk, and dragged him by the collar out upon the deck at a run. Mr. Simpson was "bucko" to his finger-tips, and had never been licked upon the high seas. But for that matter Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Dunn, K.C.B., had never hauled down his flag either to any man. It surprised him, as it would have surprised any of his crew, to find that he took this handling almost meekly. But then no one knows what he would do if the sky fell; and as far as the admiral was concerned, the entire world was an absurd and ridiculous nightmare. He rose at the end of his undignified progress and stared at the mate.

"Who—who are you?" he said.

Mr. Simpson gasped.

"Who am I—oh, who am I? Well, I'll oblige you by statin' once for all that I'm mate of this ship, and you're my dog."

But the "dog" shook his head.

"Nothing of the sort," he said, as he staggered with the remains of the opiate. "I'm a British admiral, and my name's Sir Richard Dunn. Where's my ship?"

Any ordinary kind of back answer or insubordina-

tion received only one kind of treatment on board the *California*, and when a man had been beaten to a jelly, he rarely recovered enough spirit to inquire why he had been hammered. But this was a new departure in back talk.

"Oh, you're an admiral—an admiral, heh?" said Simpson.

"Of course," said Sir Richard, and a sudden gust of rage blew the last opium out of him. "Why, damn it, sir, what the devil do you mean by laying your filthy paws on me? Where's your captain, sir? By all that's holy, I'll smash you if you so much as look at me again."

Now it is a remarkable fact that the utterly and entirely unexpected will sometimes shake the courage of the stoutest heart. It is possible that a tiger would itself turn tail if a lamb rushed at him with open mouth. And though Mr. Simpson would have tackled a prize-fighter, knowing he was a prize-fighter, the fact that one of the kind of men on whom he was accustomed to wipe his boots now turned upon him with entirely strange language and a still stranger air of authority, for a moment daunted him utterly. He stood still and gasped, while the admiral strode aft and went up the poop ladder. He was met there by the captain, who had been the terror of the seas as a mate. A narrow escape of a conviction for murder had partially reformed him. He had also become religious, and usually went below when Simpson or the second "greaser" was hammering anyone into oblivion and obedience.

"What is this?" asked Captain Blaker mildly, yet with a savage eye. "Mr. Simpson, what do you

mean by allowing your authority (and mine delegated to you) to be disregarded? "

" Sir——" said Mr. Simpson, and then the admiral turned on him.

" Hold your infernal tongue, sir," he roared. " And, sir, if you are the master of this vessel, as I suppose, I require you to put about for San Francisco. I am a British admiral, sir; my name is Sir Richard Dunn."

" Oh, you're an admiral and you 'require' ? " said Blaker. " Wa'al, I do admire! You look like an admiral : the water-front is full of such. Take that, sir."

And the resurgent old Adam in Blaker struck the admiral with such unexpected force that Dunn went heels over head off the poop and landed on Simpson. The mate improved the opportunity by kicking him violently in the ribs. When he was tired, he spoke to the admiral again.

" Now, you lunatic, take this here ball of twine and go and overhaul the gear on the main. And if you open your mouth to say another word I'll murder you."

And though he could not believe he was doing it, Sir Richard Dunn crawled aloft, and did what he was told. He was stunned by his fall and the hammering he had received, but that was nothing to the utter and complete change of air that he experienced. As he overhauled the gear he wondered if he was an admiral at all. If he was, how came he on the main-topgallant-yard of a merchant ship? If he wasn't, why was he surprised at being there? He tried to recall the last day of his life as an admiral, and was

dimly conscious of a late evening somewhere in San Francisco at which he had certainly taken his share of liquor. A vague sense of having been in a row oppressed him, but he could recall nothing till he had been yanked out of his bunk by that truculent devil of a mate then patrolling the poop.

"I—I must be mad," said the admiral.

"Now then, look alive there, you dead crawling cat," said Mr. Simpson, "or I'll come up and boot you off the yard. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir," said the admiral quickly, and as he put a new mousing on the clip-hooks of the main-topmast-staysail-tripping-line block, he murmured: "I suppose I never was an admiral after all. I don't seem to know what I am." And the hardest nut among the admirals of the Active List wiped away a tear with the sleeve of his coat as he listened to the sacred Communion Service with all its blessings, intoned in a down-east twang by the eminent Mr. Simpson.

"He's crazy," said Simpson to the second greaser. "Says he's an admiral. I've had the Apostle Peter on board, and a cook who said he was St. Paul, but this is the first time I've run against an admiral before the mast."

"Does he look like it, sir?" asked Wiggins, laughing.

"He looks the toughest case you ever set eyes on," said Simpson. "But you'd have smiled to see the way the old man slugged him off the poop. And yet there's something about him I don't tumble to. I guess that's where his madness lies. Guess I'll cure him or kill him by the time we get off Sandy

Hook. Now then, you admiral, come down here and start up the fore rigging, and do it quick, or I'll know the reason why."

And the Knight Commander of the Bath came down as he was bid, and having cast a perplexed eye over Simpson and Wiggins, who sniggered at him with amused and savage contempt, he went forward in a hurry.

"This is a nightmare," he said; "I'm dreaming. Damme, perhaps I'm dead."

When he had overhauled the gear at the fore—and being a real seaman he did it well—Wiggins called him down to work on deck, and he found himself among his new mates. By now they were all aware that he believed he was an admiral, and that he had spoken to Simpson in a way that no man had ever done. That was so much to his credit, but since he was mad he was a fit object of jeers. They jeered him accordingly, and when they were at breakfast the trouble began.

"Say, are you an admiral?" asked Knight, the biggest tough on board except Simpson and Wiggins.

And the admiral did not answer. He looked at Knight with a gloomy, introspective eye.

"Mind your own business," he said, when the question was repeated.

And Knight hove a full pannikin of tea at him. This compliment was received very quietly, and the admiral rose and went on deck.

"Takes water at once," said Knight; "he ain't got the pluck of a mouse."

But the admiral went aft and interviewed Mr. Simpson.

" May I have the honour of speaking to you, sir ? " he said, and Simpson gasped a little, but said he might have that honour.

" Well, sir," said Sir Richard Dunn, " I don't know how I got here, but here I am, and I'm willing to waive the question of my being a British admiral, as I can't prove it."

" That's right," said Simpson. " Ah, I'll have you sane enough by and by, my man."

The admiral nodded.

" But I wish to have your permission to knock the head off a man called Knight for'ard. It was always my custom, sir, to allow fights on board my own ship when I considered them necessary. But I always insisted on my permission being asked. Have I yours, sir ? "

Simpson looked the admiral up and down.

" Your ship, eh ? You're still crazy, I'm afraid. But Knight can kill you, my man."

" I'm willing to let him try, sir," said the admiral. " He hove a pannikin of tea over me just now, and I think a thrashing would do him good and conduce to the peace and order of the fo'c'sle."

" Oh, you think so," said Simpson. " Very well, you have my permission to introduce peace there."

" I thank you, sir," said the admiral.

He touched his hat and went forward. He put his head inside the fo'c'sle and addressed Knight :

" Come outside, you bully, and let me knock your head off. Mr. Simpson has been kind enough to overlook the breach of discipline involved."

And Knight, nothing loath, came out on deck, while

Simpson and Wiggins stood a little way off to enjoy the battle.

"I'd like to back the admiral," said Wiggins.

"I'll have a level five dollars on Knight," said Simpson, who remembered that he had, on one occasion, found Knight extremely difficult to reduce to pulp.

"Done with you," said Wiggins.

And in five minutes the second mate was richer by five dollars, as his mates carried Knight into the fo'c'sle.

"I don't know when I enjoyed myself more," said Simpson, with a sigh—"even if I do lose money on it. While it lasted it was real good. Did you see that most be-ewtiful upper cut? And the right-handed cross counter that finished it was jest superb. But I'll hev to speak to the victor, so I will."

And he addressed the admiral in suitable language.

"Don't you think, because you've licked him, that you can fly any flag when I'm around. You done it neat and complete, and I overlook it, but half a look and the fust letter of a word of soss and I'll massacre you myself. Do you savvy?"

And the admiral said:

"Yes, sir."

He touched his cap and went forward to the fo'c'sle to enter into his kingdom. For Knight had been 'topside joss' there for three voyages, being the only man who had ever succeeded in getting even one pay-day out of the *California*. The principle on which she was run was to make things so hot for her crew that they skipped out at New York instead of returning to San Francisco, and the fresh crew

shipped in New York did the same when they got inside the Golden Gate.

"I understand," said the admiral, as he stood in the middle of the fo'c'sle, "that the gentleman I've just had the pleasure of knocking into the middle of next week was the head bully here. Now I want it thoroughly understood in future that if any bullying is to be done, I'm going to do it."

All the once obedient slaves of the deposed Knight hastened to make their peace with the new power. They fairly crawled to the admiral.

"You kin fight," said one.

"I knew it jest so soon as you opened yer mouth," said another. "The tone of yer voice argued you could."

"It's my belief that he could knock the stuffin' out o' Mr. Simpson," said the third.

"'Twould be the best kind of fun," said another admirer of the powers that be, "for Blaker would kick Simpson in here, and give the admiral his job right off. He's got religion, has Blaker, but he was an old packet rat himself, and real 'bucko' he was, and believes in the best men bein' aft."

And though the admiral said nothing to this, he remembered it, and took occasion to inquire into its truth. He found that what he knew of the sea and its customs was by no means perfect. He learnt something every day, and not the least from Knight, who proved by no means a bad sort of man when he had once met his match.

"Is it true," asked the admiral, "what they say about Captain Blaker giving anyone the mate's job if he can thrash him?"



"It used to be the custom in the Western Ocean," said Knight, "and Blaker was brought up there. He's a real sport, for all his bein' sort of religious. Yes, I'll bet it's true." He turned to the admiral suddenly. "Say, you wasn't thinking of takin' Simpson on, was you?"

"If what you say's true, I was," said the admiral. "It don't suit me being here."

"Say now, partner," put in Knight, "what's this guff about your being an admiral? What put it into your head?"

And Sir Richard Dunn laughed. As he began to feel his feet, and find that he was as good a man in new surroundings as in the old ones, he recovered his courage and his command of himself.

"After all, this will be the deuce of a joke when it's over," he thought, "and I don't see why I shouldn't get a discharge out of her as mate. Talk about advertisement!"

He knew how much it meant.

"Look here, Knight," he said aloud, "I *am* an admiral. I can't prove it, but my ship was the *Triumphant*. I don't want to force it down your throat, but if you'd say you believed it, I should be obliged to you."

Knight put out his hand.

"I believes it, sonny," he said, "for I own freely that there's suthin' about you different from us; a way of talk, and a look in the eye that ain't formiliar in no fo'c'sle as I ever sailed in. And if you was lyin', how come you to lie so ready, bein' so drupk when Simpson hauled you out o' yer bunk? No, I believe you're speakin' the trewth."

And Sir Richard Dunn, K.C.B., shook hands with Charles Knight, A.B.

"I won't forget this," he said huskily. He felt like Mahomet with his first disciple. "And now, in confidence," said the admiral, "I tell you I mean to have Simpson's job by the time we're off the Horn."

"Good for you," cried Knight. "Oh, he kicked me somethin' cruel the time him and me had a turn-up. Give it him, old man. And here's a tip for you. If you get him down, keep him down. Don't forget he kicked you, too."

"I don't forget," said Sir Richard—"I don't forget, by any means."

Yet he did his duty like a man. Though many things were strange to him, he tumbled to them rapidly. One of his fads had been doing ornamental work even when he was an admiral, and he put fresh 'pointing' on the poop ladder rails for Blaker in a way that brought everyone to look at it. There was no one on board who could come within sight of him at any fancy work, and this so pleased Simpson that the admiral never had a cross word till they were south of the Horn. Then by chance the mate and the captain had a few words which ended in Simpson getting much the worst of the talk. As luck would have it, the admiral was the handiest to vent his spite on, and Simpson caught him a smack on the side of his head that made him see stars.

"Don't stand listenin' there to what don't concern you, you damned lazy hound," he said. And when the admiral picked himself off the deck, Simpson made a rush for him. The admiral dodged him, and shot

up the poop ladder. He took off his cap to the captain, while Simpson foamed on the main-deck and called him in vain. At any other time Blaker would have gone for the seaman who dared to escape a thrashing for the moment by desecrating the poop, but now he was willing to annoy Simpson.

"Well, what do you want?" he roared.

The admiral made a really elegant bow.

"Well, sir, I wanted to know whether Western Ocean custom goes here. I've been told that if I can thrash your mate, I shall have his job. They say forward that that's your rule, and if so, sir, I should like your permission to send Mr. Simpson forward and take his place."

There was something so open and ingenuous in the admiral that Captain Blaker, for the first time on record, burst into a shout of laughter. He went to the break of the poop and addressed the mate.

"Do you hear, Mr. Simpson?" he inquired genially.

"Send him down, sir," said Simpson.

"Are you sure you can pound him?"

Simpson gritted his teeth and foamed at the mouth.

"Kick him off the poop, sir."

The admiral spoke anxiously.

"I'm a first-class navigator, sir. Is it a bargain?"

And Blaker, who had never liked Simpson, laughed till he cried.

"Are you willing to stake everything on your fightin' abilities, Mr. Simpson?"

And when Simpson said "Ay" through his

teeth, the admiral jumped down on the main-deck.

Now, according to all precedents, the fight should have been long and arduous, with varying fortunes. But the admiral never regarded precedents, and inside of ten seconds Mr. Simpson was lying totally insensible under the spare topmast. To encounter the admiral's right was to escape death by a hair's-breadth, and it took Charles Simpson, Able Seaman (*vice* Mr. Simpson, Chief Officer), two hours and a quarter to come to.

"And I thot he could fight," said the disgusted skipper. "Come right up, Mr. What's-your-name; you're the man for me. There ain't no reason for you to trouble about my second mate, for Simpson could lay him out easy. All I ask of you is to work the whole crowd up good. And I don't care if you are an admiral, you are the right sort all the same. I guess that Simpson must have reckoned he struck a cyclone."

And Blaker rubbed his hands. Like Simpson at the fight between the admiral and Knight, he did not know when he had enjoyed himself more. He improved the occasion by going below and getting far too much to drink, as was his custom. And the promoted admiral took charge of the deck.

"Ability tells anywhere," said Sir Richard Dunn. "I didn't rise in the service for nothing. Ship me where you like, and I'll come to the top. If I don't take this hooker into New York as captain and master, I'll die in the attempt."

He had quite come to himself and was beginning to enjoy life. His natural and acquired authority

blossomed wonderfully when he took on the new job, and as Blaker never swore, the admiral's gift of language was a great vicarious satisfaction to him. Wiggins accepted the situation without a murmur. Even Simpson himself bore no malice when his supplanter not only showed none, but after knocking the bo'son's head against the bitts, gave his place to the former mate. Though he kept the men working and got the last ounce out of them, none of them were down on him.

"I tell you he's an admiral, sure," they said.

"He's got all the ways of one, I own," said Bill, an old man-o'-war's man. "I spoke to an admiral myself once, or rather he spoke to me."

"What did he say?" asked the rest of his watch.

"He said," replied Bill proudly: "he upped and said, 'You cross-eyed son of a dog, if you don't jump I'll bash the ugly head off of you.' And you bet I jumped. Oh, he's all the ways of *some* admirals, he has."

"Well, admiral or none," said the rest of the crowd, "things goes on pleasanter than they done when you was mate, Simpson."

And Simpson grunted.

"And he gets more work out of us than you done either, Simpson, for all your hammerin' of us."

"I'll likely be hammerin' some of you again shortly," said Simpson. And as he was cock of the walk in the fo'c'sle, whatever he was in the ship, the others dried up.

Nothing of great interest happened till they were well east of the Horn and hauled up for the north-

ward run. And then Blaker took to religion (or what he called religion) and rum in equally undiluted doses.

"I'm a miserable sinner, I am," he said to the admiral, "but all the same, I'll do my duty to the crowd."

He called them aft and preached to them for two hours. And when one man yawned, he laid him out with a well-directed belaying-pin. The next day, when it breezed up heavily and they were shortening sail, he called all hands down from aloft on the ground that their souls were of more importance than the work in hand.

"Come down on deck, you miserable sinners," said Blaker through a speaking-trumpet. His voice rose triumphantly above the roar of the gale. "Come down on deck and listen to me. For though I'm a miserable sinner too, there's some hopes for me, and for you there's none unless you mend your ways, in accordance with what I'm telling you."

Even with the speaking-trumpet he could hardly make himself heard over the roar of the increasing gale and the thunderous slatting of the topsails in the spilling-lines.

"Don't you think, sir, that they'd better make the topsails fast before you speak to them?" said the admiral.

"No, I don't," replied Blaker—"not much I don't, not by a jugful. For if one of 'em went overboard, I'd be responsible before the throne. And don't you forget it."

"Damme, he's mad," said Sir Richard—"mad

as a march hare. She'll be shaking the sticks out of her soon."

He leant over the break of the poop, and called up Wiggins.

"Mr. Wiggins, one word with you."

Wiggins came up, as Blaker roared his text through the trumpet.

"Will you stand by me, Mr. Wiggins, if I knock him down and take command?"

"I will; but mind his gun," said Wiggins. "When he's very bad, he'll shoot."

It was not any fear of Blaker's six-shooter that made the admiral hesitate. To take the command, even from a madman, at sea is a ticklish task and may land a man in gaol, for all his being a shanghaied admiral.

"I tell you, Mr. Wiggins, that Simpson is a good man. I'll bring him aft again."

And Wiggins made no objection when Simpson was called up by the admiral.

"Mr. Simpson," said the mate, "this is getting past a joke. Have you any objection to taking on your old job if I secure this preaching madman and take command?"

Simpson was "full up" of the fo'c'sle, and as he had a very wholesome admiration for the admiral, he was by no means loath to return to his old quarters.

"I'm with you, sir. In another quarter of an hour we shall have the sticks out of her."

And still Blaker bellowed scripture down the wind. He was still bellowing, though what he bellowed wasn't scripture, when Simpson and

Wiggins took him down below after five minutes of a row in which the deposed captain showed something of his ancient form as the terror of the Western Ocean. As they went, the admiral, now promoted to being captain of a Cape Horner, picked up the battered speaking-trumpet and wiped some blood from his face, which had been in collision.

"Up aloft with you and make those topsails fast," he roared. "Look alive, men, look alive!"

And they did look alive, for "Dicky" Dunn never needed a speaking-trumpet in any wind that ever blew. When things were snugged down and the *California* was walking north at an easy but tremendous gait, he felt like a man again. He turned to Simpson and Wiggins with a happy smile.

"Now we're comfortable, and things are as they should be, Mr. Simpson, let the men have a tot of grog. And how's Mr. Blaker?"

"Wa'al," said Simpson cheerfully, "when we left him he warn't exactly what you would call religious nor resigned."

But if Blaker was not happy, the admiral was thoroughly delighted.

"Now you see what I said was true," he declared at dinner that night; "if I hadn't been an admiral and a man born to rise, how could I have been shipped on board this ship as a foremast hand and come to be captain in six weeks? I'll be bound you never heard of a similar case, Mr. Simpson."

And Simpson never had.



## THE PROMOTION OF THE ADMIRAL 207

"Was it Shanghai Smith, do you think, as put you here?" he asked.

The admiral had heard of Shanghai Smith in the fo'c'sle.

"When I get back I'll find out," he said. "And if it was, I'll not trouble the law, Mr. Simpson. I never allow any man to handle me without getting more than even."

"You don't," said Simpson. If his manner was dry, it was sincere.

"But I don't bear malice afterwards. Your health, Mr. Simpson. This kind of trade breeds good seamen, after all. But you are all a trifle rough."

Simpson explained that they had to be.

"When the owners' scheme is to have one man do three men's work, they have to get men who will make 'em do it. And when the owners get a bad name and their ships a worse, then men like Shanghai Smith have to find us crews. If you could get back to San Francisco and hammer an owner, some of us would be obliged to you, sir."

"Ah, when I get back!" said the admiral. "This will be a remarkable yarn for me to tell, Mr. Simpson. I still feel in a kind of dream. Would you oblige me by going to Mr. Blaker and telling him that if he continues to hammer at that door I'll have the hose turned on him."

And when Simpson went to convey this message the admiral put his feet on the table and indulged in a reverie.

"I'll make a note about Shanghai Smith, and

settle with him in full. But I shall rise higher yet. I know it's in me. Steward! "

" Yes, sir," said the steward.

" I think I'll have some grog."

He drank to the future of Admiral Sir Richard Dunn, master of the *California*."

## PART II

It is easy to understand that there was something more than a flutter in shipping circles in San Francisco, to say nothing of the sailors' boarding-houses, when a telegram reached that city from New York which was expanded as follows :

### “ THE LOST ADMIRAL

*“ Admiral Sir Richard Dunn, whose mysterious disappearance in San Francisco three months ago caused such great excitement, has arrived at New York in command of the ship California. He was, it appears, assaulted, and drugged, and put on board that vessel, and owing to a series of exciting incidents during the passage, finally took charge of her. The admiral is in good health. He states that he has no idea who was responsible for the outrage.”*

The bar-tender of Shanghai Smith's house was the first to spot this cable. He put his hand on the bar and vaulted it.

“ Say, Billy, see this.”

He shook up the runner, who was taking a caulk on a hard bench, having been engaged between four

and six in getting three drunken men on board the *Wanderer*. It is often easier to get a dozen amenable to reason than three, just as it is easier to handle many sheep than few. He was very tired and sulky.

"Well, wo'd's up now?" he grunted.

"Hell is up, and flamin'," said Tom. "You ain't forgot the admiral by any chance, now?"

Billy woke as suddenly as if he had been sleeping on the look-out and had been found hard and fast by the mate.

"Eh, what, has the *California* turned up?"

"You bet she has," said Tom. And he burst into laughter. "What d'ye reckon he was on board of her when she came to N' York?"

"Cook's mate?"

"No, captain, captain! Think of that. And he says he don't know who laid him out and put him aboard of her."

Billy rose.

"Here, gimme the paper. You're drunk."

He read the telegram with protruding eyes.

"By the holy frost, but he must be a dandy. Say, Smith must know this."

He marched to Smith's bedroom and induced his boss to sit up and hear the news, after Smith had used more bad language with his eyes shut than most men in San Francisco could lay their tongues to when wide awake.

"Don't I tell you it's about the admiral," expostulated Billy; "it's about Dunn, as you shoved on the *California*."

But now Shanghai was wide awake. He looked at Billy with wicked eyes.

"As I shoved in the *California*, eh? Say that again and I'll get up and knock the corners off of you. You miserable Tarhead, if I hear you whisper that I had the last joint of the little finger of my left hand in the game, I'll murder you."

Billy fell back from the bed in alarm. Though he looked big enough to have eaten Shanghai Smith, he lacked the "devil" which had made his boss what he was—the terror of the "coast" and of the sailormen, and a political power in his quarter of the city.

"Oh, very well then, Mr. Smith, but who done it?"

"Understand that no one knows who done it, you dog," said Smith, reaching for what he called his 'pants,' "but if anyone done it, it was you. And don't you forget it. I hire you to do the work, and I'll see you does it. Don't get me mad, or you'll be runnin' to the penitentiary howlin' for ten years to get away from me."

And Billy went back to Tom.

"He's fair luny, that's what he is. But if he reckons I'm goin' to the calaboose for him, he'll run up agin a snag."

And presently Smith came out to breakfast with a face as black as a near cyclone. Billy and Tom jumped when he spoke, and all those men in his house who were in a leeshore, as regards dollars, got away from him and adorned a neighbouring fence.

"What's wrong wiv Shang'ai?" asked a Londoner; "'es a black 'un, but I never seed 'im so rorty as this!"

And no one answered him. They were a sick crowd

at any time, and now, when their slave-owner roared, their hearts were in their boots.

But Smith was only trying to keep up his own courage. Not once, but many times since he had got even with the man who had given him a thrashing, he had regretted his method of revenge.

"I'd best have bashed him and left him laying on the Front," said Smith, "and here's Tom and Bill know the whole racket. I've half a mind to have them put out of the way. In such a place as this, who *can* a man trust? Bah, it sickens me, it does. It fair sickens me."

He was virtuously indignant with an ungrateful world. Even his revenge had been a failure. How in the name of all that was holy and unholy had the admiral managed to rise from the fo'c'sle to the command of the *California*?

"And I thought Blaker and Simpson was both men!" said Smith in disgust. "There ain't any trustin' to appearances, nor to reputation neither. But how could the swine have done it?"

An early evening paper had the whole story, and as Shanghai was still up town, all his crowd of crimps and slaves roared over the yarn.

"He fo't the mate and was give 'is billet," said one. "I say, but old Blaker was a sport. That's real old Western Ocean packet law. And then Blaker went lunny with psalm-singing and the hadmiral locked 'im up. 'Strewth, but it must 'ave bin a picnic! I'd 'ave give a month's wages to see the show. But 'oo was it shang'aied a hadmiral?"

He spoke with bated breath.

"Who'd it 'be but Smith?" asked the speaker's

mate sulkily. "He's a devil, a notorious devil, as we know. He'd shanghai his father for a quarter, if he was dry. And a month back my own brother that shipped in the *Cyrus F. Brown* told me as Shanghai had a down on this very man."

"Then I wouldn't be Smith for all 'is money. This'll be a Government business."

It would have been if the admiral had been any other kind of man. But Admiral Sir Richard Dunn was one of those, and they get rarer every day, who prefer handling their own affairs. He had a gift of humour, too, and was mightily pleased with himself.

"Whoever it was that laid for me, he never meant to make me master of the *California*," he said, as he came west on the cars. "And whoever he was, I will fix him. The mate was pretty certain it was this Shanghai Smith. If it was——"

If it was, it seemed a healthy thing for Mr. Smith to leave San Francisco and hide somewhere in the Islands. But all his interests kept him where he was, even when H.M.S. *Triumphant* came down again from Esquimaux and lay waiting for the admiral off Goat Island.

The crew of the *Triumphant*, being very proud of their own special admiral, were in so furious a rage against anyone connected with crimping in the city, that no "liberty" was granted to any one of them.

"It's hall very fine," said the *Triumphants* unanimously, "but these 'ere Americans are too smart by 'alf. Them and hus'll part brass-rags one of these fine days. But ain't it fine, to think that Dicky went to sea as a man before the stick, and come out right on top?"

They chortled with exceeding pleasure,—with pleasure founded on his achievements and on the unexpected experiences he had had of sea-life.

"To think of Dicky bunking it among a crowd of merchant Jacks," said the crew. "We'd give a lot to 'ave seen him shinning up aloft for dear life."

But all the same they loved him dearly, and when he came alongside five days later, not all their sense of discipline prevented their breaking into a storm of cheers that rang out across the bay and was almost heard at Oakland. Hard as Dicky Dunn was, he went to his cabin rather in a hurry. For once in his life he could hardly trust himself to speak. But he received the congratulations of the captain and officers, including young Selwyn, who had been with him when he had been kidnapped, with the greatest calm.

"Yes, I've had some experience," he said, "and I don't know that it has done me any harm. I know more of the conditions on board merchant vessels than I did before."

"And what do you propose to do, Sir Richard?" asked Selwyn, an hour later. "The authorities and the police seemed very anxious to do what they could."

The admiral lighted one of his own cigars, and found it more to his taste than the ship's tobacco of the *California*.

"I don't propose to trouble the police," he said, "nor need there be any international correspondence so far as I'm concerned. I'll play my own game. I think, Selwyn, that I know who laid for us that night. And from what I learnt in the *California* (I learnt a



lot, by the way) I've a notion that ordinary justice would never get hold of the man, at least not in San Francisco, not even if I paid for it."

"Then what——"

But Dicky Dunn interrupted him.

"I've a notion," he said significantly.

And that afternoon he sent Selwyn ashore with a very polite note to the chief of the San Francisco police, saying that Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Dunn would be very glad to see that gentleman on board the *Triumphant* late that evening, if he could make it convenient to come.

"Let the band begin to play!" said Mr. Peter Cartwright; "it looks as if I'd better face the music. I wonder if he has any kinkle as to the man who did it? It's more than I have, unless it was Smith, or Sullivan."

As he drew his five thousand dollars a year and pickings partly through the grace of both the notorious boarding-house keepers that he mentioned, he did not relish running against them. Nevertheless, it was better to do that than run against a mightier snag. He looked, with a groan, at the pile of correspondence which had accumulated since the admiral's disappearance.

"And here's the British Consul wants to see me to-morrow!" he cried. "They'll cinch me if they can get no one else."

And he went on board the *Triumphant* feeling as if he was out of a job.

The admiral received him courteously, and was alone.

"This has been a bad business, admiral, sir," said

Mr. Cartwright, "and as chief of police of this city I feel it as a personal slur. Your request to see me anticipated me by no more than twelve hours. I proposed to seek an interview with you to-morrow morning."

"I am obliged to you," said the admiral. "Will you have anything to drink?"

"It *was* rather cold on the water," replied Cartwright.

And when the chief of police had a tumbler of hot whisky and water in both hands, the admiral opened up.

"I've sent for you, Mr. Cartwright," he began, "to tell you that I don't want any proceedings taken about this matter."

Cartwright opened his mouth and stared at the admiral in surprise. Then he began to imagine he understood. Sir Richard Dunn had evidently been somewhere on the night of his disappearance which would not suit him to have known.

"Ah, I see," said Cartwright, with a subtle smile.

"I've my own notions as to the brand of justice dispensed in this State, Mr. Cartwright. It is considerably milder than the native liquors. I want your assistance in doing without the law, and in administering justice myself. Have you any notion of the gentleman who shipped me in the *California*?"

"It was probably a boarding-house master," said Cartwright.

"Of course."

"It might have been Sullivan, or the Sheeny, or Williams, or Smith."

"Is that the scoundrel they know here as Shanghai Smith?" asked the admiral.

And Cartwright nodded.

"The crew of the *California* put it down to him at once."

"I don't know that it was necessary him," said Cartwright pensively; "though he has the worst name, he's no worse than the others. For my own part, I reckon the Sheeny—he's a Jew boy, of course—is a deal tougher than Smith."

And just then Selwyn, who knew the chief of police was on board, put his head into the admiral's cabin.

"Could I speak to you a moment, Sir Richard?"

And Dicky Dunn went outside.

"I thought as you had this Cartwright with you, sir," said Selwyn, "that I ought to tell you a queer yarn that has just been brought me by one of the quartermasters. It seems that one of the men has a story that you once had a fight with Shanghai Smith and hurt him badly. It was in Australia, I believe—in Melbourne."

"Stay a minute," said the admiral; "let me think. Yes, by Jove, I did have a row on Sandridge Pier years ago, and I broke the man up so that he had to go to a hospital. And his name—yes, it *was* Smith. Thanks, Selwyn, I'll see if this man ever was in Australia."

He went back to Cartwright.

"Now as to the Sheeny, admiral," said Cartwright, who was beginning to feel comfortable.

"Never mind the Sheeny, Mr. Cartwright," said his host; "do you know Smith's record? Where did he come from?"

"He came from Melbourne," replied the chief.

And the admiral slapped his leg.

"That's the man, I believe."

"Why?"

"Never mind why," said Dunn. "But supposing it was, could we prove it against him?"

"I doubt it," said Cartwright cheerfully. "Probably no one would know it but his runner. And Bill Haines would perjure himself as easy as drink lager."

"But if we did prove it?"

"There'd be an appeal, and so on," said the chief.

He indicated large and generous delay on the part of the merciful American law by a wave of his hand.

"You see we couldn't prove, anyhow, that he knew you was you," said Cartwright, "and if I know my own business, it would come down to a matter of assault and so many dollars."

"That's what I imagined," said the admiral.

"So I propose to take the matter in hand myself and relieve you of it. For though Smith, or the real man, might come off easily, if I choose to have it made an international business someone will have to pay who is not guilty."

"That's likely enough," said Cartwright uneasily.

"On the whole, admiral, I'd rather you took the job on yourself, provided it was put through quietly. What do you propose?"

Dunn put his hands in his pockets, and "quarter-decked" his cabin.

"I want to be sure it's Smith—morally sure. How can I be made sure? I'll tell you now what I know about him."

He repeated what Selwyn had said, and told him

the story of his having fought a man on Sandridge Pier at Melbourne fifteen years before.

"His name was Smith."

"It fits as neat as a pair of handcuffs," said the chief of police. "I'll think over it and let you know. Stay, sirree, I've got it now. Look here, admiral, now you mark me. This is a scheme. It'll work, or my name's Dennis. I'll have it put about in the right quarter that though there ain't evidence to touch the real man who worked the racket on you, it is known who actually corralled you and shoved you on the *California*. I'll get the proper man to give it away that a warrant is being made out. And next day I'll have all the runners of all the chief boarding-houses arrested. Do you see?"

"No, I don't," said the admiral.

"Oh, come," cried Cartwright. "The man we don't arrest will be the man who did it."

"Yes, but——"

"Well," said Cartwright, "I understood you didn't particularly hanker to catch the understrapper."

"Ah," said the admiral, "of course I see. You mean——"

"I mean the boarding-house boss will shove the runner that did it out of sight. And then you'll know him by reason of the very means he takes not to be given away. For of course he'd reckon that the runner on being held would squeal."

"It's a good plan," said the admiral. "And when I know, what kind of punishment would Mr. Smith like least of all?"

"Provided you remember he's an American citizen, I don't care what you do," replied the chief. "But

if you asked me, I should get him served the way he's served you. Shanghai Smith among a crowd of sailormen in an American ship, such as the *Harvester* (and the skipper of the *Harvester* hates him like poison)—and *she* sails in three days—would have a picnic to recollect all his life. For, you see, they know him."

"I'll think it over," said the admiral. "Your plan is excellent."

"So it is," said Cartwright, as he was rowed ashore, "for Smith ain't no favourite of mine, and at the same time it will look as if I gave him the straight racket, anyhow."

He sent an agent down to the water-front that very night. The man dropped casual hints at the boarding-houses, and he dropped them on barren ground everywhere but at Shanghai Smith's.

"Jehoshaphat," said Smith, "so that's the game!"

Peter Cartwright had, in his own language, "reckoned him up to rights"; for the very first move that Smith played was to make a break for Billy's room. As the runner had been up most of the night before enticing sailormen out of a Liverpool ship just to keep his hand in, he was as fast asleep as a bear on Christmas Day, and he was mighty sulky when Smith shook him out of sleep by the simple process of yanking his pillow from under his head.

"Ain't a man to get no sleep that works for you?" he demanded. "What's up now?"

"Hell is up, and fizzling," replied Smith. "I've had word from Peter Cartwright that you'll be arrested in the mornin' if you don't skin out. It's the

admiral. I wish I'd never set eyes on him. Come, dress and skip; 'twon't do for you to be jugged; mebbe they'd hold you on some charge till you forgot all you owe to me. There ain't no such thing as real gratitude left on earth."

Billy rose and shuffled into his clothes sullenly enough.

"And where am I to skip to?"

"To Portland," said Smith; "the *Mendocino* leaves in the mornin' for Crescent City and Astoria, don't she? Well, then, go with her and lie up with Grant or Sullivan in Portland till I let you know the coast is clear. And here's twenty dollars: go easy with it."

He sighed to part with the money.

"I'd sooner go down to Los Angeles," grunted Billy.

But Smith explained to him with urgent and explosive blasphemy that he was to get into another State in order to complicate legal matters.

"You've the brains of a Flathead Indian, you have," said Smith, as he turned Billy into the street on his way to find the *Mendocino*. "What's the use of havin' law if you don't use it?"

And in the morning, when Smith heard that ten runners at least had been urgently invited to interview Mr. Peter Cartwright, he was glad to be able to declare that Billy was not on hand.

"He's gone East to see his old man," he said drily. "And 'as his father is a millionaire and lives in the Fifth Avenue, N' York, he couldn't afford to disregard his dyin' desire to see him."

"You are a daisy, Smith," said the police officer

who had come for Billy. "Between you and me, what have you done with him?"

Smith shook his head.

"I shot him last night and cut him up and pickled him in a cask," he said with a wink. "And I've shipped him to the British Ambassador at Washington, C.O.D."

"You're as close as a clam, ain't you, Smith? But I tell you Peter is havin' a picnic. This admiral's game was playin' it low down on Peter, whoever did it. There are times when a man can't help his friends."

Smith lied freely.

"You can tell Peter I had nothin' to do with it."

"Yes, I can *tell* him!" said the police officer. And he did tell him. As a result the chief of police wrote to the admiral:

"SIR,—I have interrogated all the runners but one belonging to the chief boarding-houses, and have succeeded in obtaining no clue. The one man missing was runner to Mr. William Smith, commonly known as 'Shanghai' Smith. In the circumstances, and considering what you said to me, I am inclined to wait developments. If you will inform me what you wish me to do, I shall be glad to accommodate you in any way.

"Yours truly,

"PETER CARTWRIGHT.

"P.S.—If you could write me a letter saying you are quite satisfied with the steps I have taken to bring the offender to justice, I should be obliged.



" P.S.—If you wish to meet Mr. John P. Sant, captain of the *Harvester*, now lying in the bay and sailing the day after to-morrow, I can arrange it."

But both the postscripts were written on separate pieces of paper. Mr. Cartwright was not chief of police in a land of justice for nothing. He knew his way about.

Dicky Dunn, on receiving Peter's letter, called in his flag-lieutenant.

" When they shanghaied me, they knocked you about rather badly, didn't they, Selwyn? "

Selwyn instinctively put his hand to the back of his head.

" Yes, Sir Richard. They sand-bagged me, as they call it, and kicked me too."

" I'm pretty sure I know who did it," said the admiral, " and I'm proposing to get even with the man myself. It seems that it will be a difficult thing to prove. Besides, I'm not built that way. I don't want to prove it and send the man to gaol. I like getting even in my own fashion. What would you do if I could tell you who it was that laid the plot against us that night? "

Selwyn was a clean-skinned, bright-eyed, close-shaven young fellow, as typical an Anglo-Saxon salted in the seas as one could meet. His eyes sparkled now.

" I—I'd punch his head, sir."

The admiral nodded.

" I believe I did punch his head, years ago, Selwyn. But he was looking for a fight and found it, and

ought to have been satisfied. Between you and me and no one else, the chief of police here and I have fixed this matter up between us. He says that he has no evidence, and the only man who might have given the affair away has been shipped off somewhere. I'm going to show Mr. Smith that he didn't make a bucko mate of me for nothing. And I want you to help. I've got a scheme."

He unfolded it to Selwyn, and the young lieutenant chuckled.

"He used to be a seaman," said the admiral, "but for twelve years he's been living comfortably on shore, sucking the blood of sailors. And if I know anything about American ships—and I do—he'll find three months in the fo'c'sle of this *Harvester* worse than three years in a gaol. Now we're going to invade the United States quite unofficially, with the connivance of the police!"

He lay back and laughed.

"Oh, I tell you," said the admiral, "he ran against something not laid down in his chart when he fell in with me. You can come ashore with me now and we'll see this Cartwright. American ways suit me, after all."

"Then I understand, Mr. Cartwright," said the admiral, an hour later, "that there won't be a policeman anywhere within hail of this Smith's house to-morrow night?"

"I've got other business for them," said Peter.

"And I can see Mr. Sant here this afternoon?"

"I'll undertake to have him here if you call along at three."

The admiral spent the interval at lunch with the British Consul.

"I tell you what, Stanley," said the admiral, "I don't care what they did to me, for it's done me no harm. But after this you should be able to make them enforce the laws. If they would only do that, the Pacific Coast wouldn't stink so in the nostrils of shipmasters and shipowners."

The consul explained the local system of politics. It appeared that everyone with any business on the borders of crime insured against the results of accidents by being in politics.

"And if the thieving politicians appoint the man to control them, what's the result?"

"The result is—Shanghai Smith," said the admiral. "Well, I'll see you later. I've an appointment with Mr. Sant, of the *Harvester*."

The consul stared.

"What? With Sant? Why, he got eighteen months' hard labour for killing a man six months ago."

"But he's not in prison?"

"Of course not," said the consul. "He was pardoned by the Governor."

"He's just the man I wish to see," cried Dicky Dunn.

He found Sant waiting at Cartwright's office. He was a hard-bitten, weather-beaten gentleman, and half his face was jaw. That jaw had hold of a long cigar with his back teeth. He continued smoking and chewing, and did both savagely. What Peter had said to him did not come out, but by agreement the admiral was introduced as Mr. Dunn.

" You have reason not to like Shanghai Smith ? " said Peter.

" That's so," nodded Sant.

" Mr. Dunn does not like him either. Could you make any use of him on board the *Harvester* ? "

" I could," said Sant, grinning ; " he'd be a useful man."

" If you imagined you missed a man to-morrow morning just as you were getting up your anchor, and someone hailed you and said they had picked one up, you would take him aboard ? "

" Wet or dry," said Sant.

" I'll undertake he shall be wet," said the admiral.

" Eh ? " And he turned to Selwyn.

" Yes, sir," replied the lieutenant, " that could be arranged."

" Very well, Mr. Sant," said the admiral.

" And it's understood, of course," said Peter, " that you gentlemen never saw each other and don't know each other when you meet, it being a matter of mutual obligation."

" I agree," said Sant. And the admiral shook hands with a gentleman who had been pardoned by an amiable Governor.

" And of course," Cartwright added as he escorted the admiral and Selwyn into the passage, " if there *should* be a shindy at Smith's and any of your men are in it, we shall all explain that it was owing to your having been put away. And two wrongs then will make it right. I guess the newspapers will call it square."

" Exactly so," said the admiral.

And when he reached the *Triumphant* he had very

nearly worked out the plan by which the row at Shanghai Smith's was to occur.

"I'll just go over it with you, Selwyn," he said, when he reached his cabin again. "Now you must remember I rely on your discretion. A wrong step may land us in trouble with the authorities and the Admiralty. There never was a Government department yet which wouldn't resent losing a fine chance of a paper row, and if they catch me settling this matter out of hand, my name is Dennis, as the Americans say. And I don't want your name to be Dennis either."

"Well, what do you propose, Sir Richard?" asked Selwyn.

"This is rightly your show and mine," said the admiral. "I won't have anyone else in it that I can help. I ought to speak to Hamilton, but I won't. I'll keep him out of the trouble"—for Hamilton was the captain of the *Triumphant*. "I suppose the men here *are* really fond of me?" said the admiral interrogatively.

"They have no monopoly of that," said Selwyn.

"Is there any one of them you could drop a hint to, that you could trust?"

"Of course," said Selwyn; "there's Benson, whose father works for mine as gardener. We used to fight in the toolhouse at home, and now he would jump overboard if I asked him."

"Do you mean Benson, my cox's'n?"

"Yes, sir."

"He's the very man. You might let him know that if he *should* get into any trouble, he will be paid for it. I leave the rest to you. You can go ashore

now, with this note to Stanley. That will give you a chance to take Benson with you and speak to him on the quiet. I don't know that I care particularly to hear any more about it till the day after to-morrow, unless I have to. Ultimately all the responsibility is mine, of course."

And by that Selwyn understood rightly enough that Dicky Dunn, for all his cunning, had no intention of shirking trouble if trouble came. He went ashore and took Benson up-town with him.

"Do the men think it was Shanghai Smith that laid for us, and put the admiral away, Benson?" he asked as they went up Market Street.

"There ain't the shadder of a doubt 'e done it, sir," said Benson.

"And they don't like it?"

"Lord bless you, sir! It's very 'ard 'avin' all liberty stopped, but between you and me it was wise to stop it. They would 'ave rooted 'is 'ouse up and shied the wreckage into the bay."

"It's a pity that you and about twenty more couldn't do it," said Selwyn. "And if one could only catch hold of the man himself and put him on board an outward bound ship, it would do him good."

Benson slapped his leg.

"Oh, sir, there ain't a man on board the *Triumphant* that wouldn't do six months with pleasure to 'ave the 'andlin' of 'im."

"No?"

"For sure, sir."

"I was lying awake last night thinking of it," said Selwyn; "at least, I believe I was awake—perhaps I was dreaming. But I seemed to think that a couple

of boats' crews were ashore, and that you went to Shanghai's place for a drink."

"I've done that same, sir," said Benson, "and the liquor was cruel bad."

"And I dreamed—yes, I suppose it was a dream—that you started a row and made hay of his bar and collared him, and took him in the cutter and rowed him round the bay till about four in the morning."

"You always was very imaginary and dreamy as a boy, sir, begging your pardon, sir," said Benson.

"And I dreamed you came to the *Harvester*—"

"Her that's lying in the bay—the ship with the bad name among sailormen?"

"That's the ship," said Selwyn; "and you hailed her and asked the captain if a man had tried to escape by swimming. And he said 'Yes,' and then you said you'd picked him up."

Benson looked at him quickly.

"But he wouldn't be wet, sir."

"Oh yes, he would, Benson. You could easily duck him overboard."

Benson stared very hard at the lieutenant.

"Of course. I could very easily duck him—and love to do it, too. And did the captain of the *Harvester* own to him, sir?"

Selwyn nodded.

"He would, Benson—I mean he did, of course."

"I suppose," asked Benson, with his eyes on the pavement, "that it had been arranged so?"

"In the dream, yes," said the lieutenant.

"Was it for to-morrow evening, sir?"

"I thought so," said Selwyn. "And the curious thing about it was that the whole thing was done as

quietly as possible. All you men went to work in silence without as much as a hurrah. And one of the boats brought me ashore and the other brought the admiral. And it was only after you had put the man on board the *Harvester* that you came back for the admiral at five in the morning, Benson."

"And what about the boat as brought you, sir?"

"I came back at twelve and went on board after the fight, while you were rowing Mr. Smith about the bay, cheering him up."

"Was there anything else, sir?"

"Nothing," said Selwyn, "only that I forget whether it came out. If it did, the men said it was a game all of their own. And I think—no, I'm sure—that if anyone got into trouble it paid him well, after all."

"Of course it would, sir," said Benson warmly. "I wish it could really come off. You never know your luck, sir."

"I think Mr. Smith doesn't," said Selwyn.

And when Benson went on board again and had a long confabulation with two boats' crews, there was a unanimous opinion among them that Mr. Smith had piled his ship up with a vengeance when he ran against a British admiral.

"There ain't to be no weapons," said Benson—"nothin' worse nor more cuttin' than a staysail 'ank as a knuckle-duster, and even that I don't recommend. An odd stretcher or two and the bottles there will do the job. And the word is silence, now, and then."

"Mum's the word," said the men. And like the children that they were, they wrought the whole ship's



company into a frenzy of excitement, by dropping hints about as heavy as a half-hundredweight on everyone who was not in the game. Had there been much longer to wait than twenty-four hours, they must have told, or burst. And if they had not burst, the others would have finally reached the truth by the process of exhaustion.

It was nine o'clock on the following evening that the admiral went on shore to dine with the British Consul. He told Benson that he might be later than eleven. And as Benson touched his cap he took the liberty of believing he might be as late as five in the morning. And just about eleven Selwyn came ashore in another boat with papers which had to go to the admiral. That is what he said to the first lieutenant. Captain Hamilton was sleeping the night at the house of a cousin of his in San Francisco.

"I shall be back in an hour, Thomas," said Selwyn. And the two coxswains were left in command of the cutting-out expedition. The whole business was nearly wrecked at the outset by the settlement of the question as to who was to be left in charge of the boats. Finally Thomas and Benson ordered two men to stay, and the defrauded men sat back and growled most horribly as the rest moved off towards Shanghai Smith's in loose order.

"Look 'ere," said Billings to Graves as they were left alone, "it's hobvious one must stay with the boats; but one's enough, and on an hexpedition like this, horders ain't worth a damn. I'll howe you a quid, a whole quid, and my grog for a month if you'll be the man to stay."

"No, I'll toss you, the same terms both sides."

And the spin of the coin sent Billings running after the rest. He was received by Benson with curses, but he stuck to the party all the same.

"Very well, you report me! You know you can't," he said defiantly. "And I've give Graves a thick 'un and my grog for a month to be let come."

This awful sacrifice appealed even to Benson.

"All right," he said. "But if I can't report you for this, I can the next time."

"Next time be damned," cried Billings; "'oo cares about next time, now?"

And they hove in sight of Shanghai Smith's.

It was the first time a bluejacket had been near the place since a day or two before the admiral's disappearance. And at first when Shanghai saw them come in he regretted that Billy, his best fighting man, was by now well on his way to Portland. But for at least ten minutes the *Triumphants* behaved very well. Benson had a good head and had arranged matters very neatly.

"You look 'ere," he had said; "the thing to look out for is the barman. He keeps a gun, as they calls it 'ere, on a shelf under the bar. Smith, 'e'll 'ave one in his pocket. So when I says, 'This rum would poison a dog,' don't wait for no back-answer, but lay the bar-keeper out quick, with a stone matchbox or anything 'andy. And the nearest to Smith does the same to 'im. He'll likely not be be'ind, but if 'e is, bottle 'im too, and not a word of jaw about it first or last."

They stood up to the bar, and Benson ordered drinks for himself and three particular pals of his.

"Ain't this Mr. Smith's?" he asked.

"I'm Smith," said Shanghai.

"'Ere's to you. I've often heard of you," said Benson. And three or four merchant seamen sitting about the room sniggered and passed a few sneering remarks among themselves about "Liberty Jack."

Smith, who had taken enough that night to make him rash, referred to the admiral.

"So your admiral has come back, has he?"

"He has," said the *Triumphants*. "And Dicky Dunn is lookin' for the man that played that dirty game on him."

And Smith shrugged his shoulders as he half turned away.

"'Tain't half so dirty as this rum," said Benson; "it would poison a dog."

And as the words left his mouth the ball opened with a sudden and tremendous crash. Two heavy matchboxes went for Tom behind the bar; one laid him out as quietly as if he had been hocussed; the other smashed a bottle which held a liquor known on the Barbary Coast as brandy, and starred the mirror behind the shelves. Thomas at the same moment stooped and caught Shanghai Smith by the ankles and pitched him on his head. He never had time to reach for his 'gun.' The merchant seamen jumped to their feet and made for the door.

"Stop them!" said Benson, and half a dozen bluejackets hustled them back again. "No you don't, Johnnies; you can stay and 'ave free drinks, and look after the man behind the bar. Drag out that Smith and get 'im in the open air." And

Thomas dragged Smith into the darkness by his collar.

"There's to be no drinkin' for us," said Benson. "Smash what you like, and taste nothin'." And in less than a minute Shanghai's place was a lamentable and ghastly spectacle.

"Serves him right," said one of the merchant seamen, as he salved a bottle of poison. "Oh, ain't he a sailor-robbing swine?"

"Fetch him in and let him look at it," said Benson, with a wink.

Thomas had been primed.

"He's come to and run like billy-oh!" he cried.

But Smith was incapable of running. He was being carried by two bluejackets.

"After 'im, after 'im," said Benson; and in another moment the whole house was clear.

When Tom came to, he found the place a wreck, and four boarders too far gone in free liquor to offer any useful explanation of what had occurred since the rum had been pronounced fit to poison a dog.

"All I know is," said the soberest, "that he fit and we fit and fit and fit, and then 'e run."

And when Tom sought for the police, it was very odd that there was not one to be found in the quarter of San Francisco which most needs clubbing to keep it in order. There was not even one to bear witness that a crowd of bluejackets and an American citizen had come along the water-front at midnight. But five minutes after midnight a British lieutenant could have taken his oath that both crews were in their boats and at least moderately sober.

"I've seen the admiral, Benson," said Selwyn, as he stepped into his boat and sat down, "and he *may* be later than he said."

"Very well, sir," replied Benson.

And as soon as Selwyn had disappeared into the darkness, the boat with Mr. Shanghai Smith followed suit. And the bay of San Francisco is not so well policed that they had anyone inquiring what they were doing as they pulled across to Saucelito, and laid up quietly till three o'clock.

"He ain't dead, we hopes," said the crew of the boat.

"Not 'e," said Benson; "'is 'eart beats all to rights, and 'is head is perfectly sound, bar a lump the size of a 'en's egg. That upendin' dodge of Thomas' is very fatal in a row—oh, it's very fatal."

It was nearly two o'clock before Shanghai made any motion. But when he did begin to get conscious, he found his mind and his tongue with surprising rapidity.

"That 'ead of yourn must be made of five-eighths boiler-plate, Mr. Smith," said Benson, as Smith sat up suddenly.

"What am I doin' here?" asked Smith.

"'Ow do we know?" asked the delighted crew. "You *would* come. It warn't no good excusin' of ourselves."

Smith put his hand to his head.

"Who hit me?" he demanded savagely.

"No one," said the crew unanimously; "you tried to stand on your 'ead."

"Put me ashore," said Smith. "What are you goin' to do?"

"We're waitin' to see the '*Arvester* yonder 'eave 'er anchor up," replied Benson. "We're in the sailor-supplyin' line, we are, same as you was."

"He don't like to hear that," said Billings; "we're cutting him out of a job. And this time we ain't supplyin' admirals."

"No, we ain't. Yah, you man-buyin', sailor-robbin' swine! And 'twas you dared touch our admiral. Oh, you dog, you!"

They all took a turn at him, and Smith saw he was in the tightest corner he had ever occupied. This was satisfactorily expressed for him.

"Say, Shanghai, did you ever hear of Barney's bull?"

And when Smith refused to answer, they answered for him.

"He was jammed in a clinch, and so are you. You're goin' to 'ave the finest time of all your life. Did you ever 'ear of Sant of the '*Arvester*?"

And Smith, for all his brutal courage, shook in his boots.

"I'll give you chaps a hundred dollars to put me ashore," he cried. "I never touched Sir Richard Dunn."

"Dry up," said Benson, "and don't lie. We wouldn't part with you, my jewel, not for a thousand. What made you desert from the '*Arvester*, a comfortable ship like that, with sich a duck of a skipper?"

"I'll give you a thousand," said Smith desperately.

"At four o'clock you're goin' aboard the '*Arvester*—and 'tis nigh on three now. Sant wouldn't miss a

man like you, so smart and 'andy, for all the gold in Californy. Own up as you shanghaied the admiral? "

Smith grasped at any chance of avoiding the *Harvester*. For Sant had a dreadful name, and both his mates were terrors.

" If I own I put him away, will you take me ashore and hand me over to the police? "

He was almost in a state of collapse.

Benson looked at the man, and in the faint light of far-off day still below the horizon the boat's crew saw him wink.

" We'll vote on it, if you owns up. What d'ye say, chaps? "

" Ay, we'll vote," said the men. " Say, did you do it? "

But Smith saw how the voting would go, and refused to speak. They heard six bells come across the water from many ships. And then they heard seven. There was a grey glint in the east. The sand-dunes on the verge of the Ocean Park whitened as they pulled for the *Harvester*. They heard the clank of her windlass brakes and the bull voice of her mate, as he encouraged his men to do their best by threatening them with three months of hell afloat.

Smith offered Benson two thousand dollars.

" I wouldn't part with you except to Sant for all you ever robbed men of," said Benson—" and what that is, on'y you knows. Pull, boys; her cable's up and down. Nô, hold on a moment; he must be wet, of course."

In spite of his struggles they put him over the side

and soused him thoroughly. When they pulled him on board again, he sat cursing.

"Now, boys, bend your backs."

And when he came up alongside the *Harvester* she was just moving under the draught of her loosed topsails.

"*Harvester*, ahoy!" cried Benson.

"Hallo!" said Sant. "What is it?"

"You don't happen to have lost one of your crew, tryin' to desert by swimmin', sir?"

"Have you picked him up? What's his name, does he say?"

"It's Smith, sir."

"That's the man," said Sant. "I want him badly."

But Smith cried out:

"This is kidnappin', Mr. Sant. I refuse to go."

"Oh, Smith," said Sant, "I'll take the chances of it's bein' anythin' you like. Throw them a rope."

And the *Triumphants* towed alongside.

"Up you go," said Benson.

"I won't," said Smith.

"Won't you?" asked Benson. "We'll see about that. Hook on there, Billings."

And the next moment Smith was jammed in a running bowline round his waist.

"Sway him up," said Benson; and the crew of the *Harvester* hoisted the notorious robber with about the only feelings of pleasure they were likely to know till they reached New York. And as the *Triumphants* pushed off they heard the mate address Mr. Smith in language which did his reputation and the reputation of the ship most ample justice.



“ There’s talk and there’s a fore-topsail-yard-ahoy voice for you,” said Benson. “ Oh, Mr. Smith will be looked after, he will. Now, chaps, pull for it, or the admiral will be waitin’, and if that ‘appens, ’twill be ‘ Stand from under.’ ”



# THE LOFTY-MINDED MARINER



## THE LOFTY-MINDED MARINER

THEY were very quiet in the bar of the old Brig at Anchor and, seeing that the weather was far too threatening for fishing on the morrow, they were glad to make themselves comfortable when the night came down. It was fine to take a rest and get cleaned up from the fish-muck that the gulls were now dreaming of and the cats still quarrelling over on the wharf and beach just outside the warm inn's hospitable door. They were good men and comfortable and had a pleasant sense of the fireside when the glass went down and there was every sign of heavy weather to be seen in the early high dawn and wild-coloured oily sky. So at the onset of the squally night they said it was the kind of time to stay at home and, resting their hard hands on their warming knees by the fire, kept on repeating that for comfort. But the big old seaman in the fire corner made japes about it, for his notion was that every sea-dog should be at sea when he could get there, weather or none. It was no jolly thought to them, but all the same they reckoned him a pleasant man and kindly though queer in his notions and not so sane as some. Tall he was and somewhat thin, but mighty in the shoulders and big-jointed. He

was broad-chested too and deep, and his hands were like the flukes of an anchor, and the skin of his face the colour of a tanned sail. His eyebrows were heavy, but his eyes were so like the eyes of an eagle that it seemed he looked through the world and even beyond it. That he was a wise man these folks felt sure, for he had seen the great world and his skull was big, and his thatch of hair, which projected over his brow, hid not the shape of it. They said among each other that he looked like a great wise bird, and he was, as they knew well, properly full of wondrous tales like all ancient pilgrims of the sea. And he had a mighty power of big words.

"Come now," said the stranger, "who'll drink with me? Those that won't are no friends of mine, for rich or poor I'm a free man with money and I have a very lofty mind."

So they all drank with him and wondered how it was he had a lofty mind.

"Aye, I'm a wonder of a man," said the stranger as he pondered. "I'm all for deep water; tall water's what I love, the big seas of the good round world. There's scarce a port betwixt heaven and hell I've not been into. Aye, and I've been into the port of heaven too, or anchored in the roads of it with heaven just under my lee! If you'd like to hear I'll tell you about it when I have my drink upon my knee, here in my fist, after the manner of a good sailorman."

Some of the quiet crowd at the Brig almost shook in their shoes. This was strange talk of the harbour of heaven. What did the man mean? They knew not whence he had come; and when they asked him

he swore strange long-winded, new-fangled foreign oaths, as long as a main-royal-backstay. And then he shook his head and owned he knew it was wrong to swear.

"But you see, mates, so far as swearing is concerned I've always been a wet ship, so to speak, and can't help it. 'Tis the ancient nature of me coming out and I'm full of ancient nature though I have a lofty mind. Where did I come from, young man? What does that matter? Say I walked ashore from a pirate ship, or maybe I was spanged off an angel's thumb nail and tumbled, tumbled, tumbled through all space till I brought up at the Brig at Anchor! Come, you fine young woman, get me some brandy."

And the wondering young woman got him brandy.

"This is a sweet quiet place, this fishing port of yours," said the stranger, "'tis a good spot to lay up in for a full due. But why is it that some of you likely young men are not out at sea this night, fishing for the glory of God and the due profit of your families?"

"Oh, sir," said little John Jose, who was in the other corner by the fire, "'tis going to be a wild night, and 'tis best here by long chawks."

The stranger shook his head.

"Aye, but you have mostly the look of those that'd stay in for a wild night that wasn't too wild. No doubt you have a fine handy port and a comfortable home under your lee when it blows a capful of wind. But the right thing is to be driven in, not to stay in, lads. But how can I blame you? No, little man, you've not had my trials nor the

wisdom that came to me nor my native strength, which I've proved all the world over, even before I grew lofty in my thoughts."

"Why," said Bill Tregenna, who sat next to John Jose and stared at the seaman with awe-stricken eyes, "why, sir, you've the look of a man that could tell strange tales. That you've seen things is as plain as this pipe in my fist."

"That's true," said the kindly-eyed seaman, "I've seen the strange wonders of the deep. I could spin you a yarn as thick as your thigh and as long as a cable, a terrible yarn and as true as the Book."

"Aye, tell us one, do," said John Jose eagerly.

"Do, do!" said half the others, with their eyes fixed upon the talker.

"'Twould be almost waste to tell you longshore fishermen tales of the deep sea," he said thoughtfully, with his hands upon his bony knees.

Yet he shook his head and seemed to ponder as though he were hunting in the lockers of his mind for some coil of a yarn fit for such babes of the comfortable land. And presently he spoke, half as if he was speaking to himself, though his eyes bored through John Jose, till John wondered whether he was being hurt or whether the stranger saw him at all.

"There's a tale I have in my mind that I've had coiled up there this long time. I was thinking of my old ship, the *Fair Maid of Perth*, the fine old barque I was bo'son in. That little man in front of me reminded me of her, for he spoke a while back of 'fair-maids,' and when I asked what they might



be he allowed they were fish, 'pilchards,' said he, 'why, man alive, pilchards are fair maids.' And it brought back the *Fair Maid* to me. Oh, she was a comfortable ship and sea-kindly, a noble and a wholesome ship, and very weatherly, with a clean entrance and a fine clean run, and she went through the water most sweetly. She'd a good skipper, a grand comfortable man, fat and broad, but knowledgeable and good to work with. And under him was a mate who was after my own heart and the dead spit of me for size and the power of his hands. We respected each other therefore and never had a hard word between us, for I was a good bo'son and knew my work, and the *Fair Maid* was a wife to me and I'd have her as handsome as I could. And there was a second mate that I loved as if he were my brother. He was a bright boy and virtuous, a strange thing in a seaman who had blue eyes and a skin like a woman's, that the women wanted to kiss. And now we was out in the Eastern seas, wimble-wambling about this way and that way. I was a fine young man in those days and, for all my bigness, as quick up aloft as any boy. And here I am now on my hunkers, set on a bench in an inn called the Brig at Anchor, and all I own is under my hat, and I'm set about by strange men who know nothing of the big world. But listen and mark me, for if you've the sense and the feelings of shotten herrings I'll make you little men shiver."

And shiver they did.

"The world's a strange place, but the East's a wonder," said the old seaman.

And he looked away beyond them. Some of them

knew that he saw the wild shining beaches and the scented woods that dipped their roots in the ocean, and the glittering oily rivers, for of these things their fathers and grandfathers had spoken, since some of them had ploughed the great seas in their youth. And they knew his mind must be on many a sweet dark maid or on wild men and strange and marvellous beasts for whom man was a prey.

" 'Tis a wild taking place the East," he said at last, "one does strange things there, for being so far from the manners one was born with a man isn't kept up tight. I've done things I shouldn't; I know it, for now I'm a lofty-minded man with a certain greatness and fineness of the spirit and a mighty content in me at being what I am. And high and lofty things have happened to me. I've had rises and falls that I'll tell you, things you never dreamed of, for as I let on to you I'm lofty-minded and my nature's big and pleasant when not crossed. But let's get back to the *Fair Maid of Perth*, as pleasant a ship as ever any man sailed in, with as kindly a crowd as I was ever shipmates with. And they're all dead. And here I sit on my hunkers with hot brandy and water in my claw. Now in those times we made many a circumbendibus among the islands of the East, by Ombay and Gillolo Strait and Dampier Strait, for we knocked about in those wild parts for trade, and we saw the Java Sea and the Celebes and Banka Strait and Carinata and Gaspar : and Macassar we knew and the Arafura Sea and the Moluccas. And I disremember many of the places that we put in at and many of the passages, but all the inner and the outer routes we

knew like the insides of our sea-chests, Palawan and Bali Strait and Sapie Strait and Pitt's Passage, and many others I disremember. A chart with our traverses plotted out would have looked like a Portuguese pig-knot, or a ground-swell knot, or a skein of wool a kitten had played with in your missus's Sunday parlour. Then at last there came the big day that began the time at which I got to be a lofty man, a lofty-minded man, with a knowledge of high things and the great angels and the soundings about the high gates of Heaven. For the skipper and the mate grew uneasy, talking of signs of a typhoon or a cyclone, the great winds that sink lofty ships. For a little fall of the glass in such latitudes may mean much. Now, they said, it tumbled downstairs, and there was a strange look about the sky as the mate owned, for without a cloud the sun covered herself, and there was a heavy vapour in the upper air. And before that the moon had been a bit greenish with a little blue in it. It made us look forty ways for Sunday and put the fear of God in our hearts. For the unnatural wrote out on the great scroll of the heavens makes strong men fearful in their proud hearts. And the skipper said to the mate, with a little trembling in his voice:

" 'As we're so close, we'll lie up in the old place.'

" 'Aye,' said the mate, 'aye, sir, 'tis a good sound thought; though it blew seventy cyclones outside we'd be as safe there as a fish in a pool.'

" So, getting a slant of wind, we put her about and sailed for an island to the south-east of us. The skipper made very free with the land, but all the same there was bold water there with the blueness

of a tub of indigo. And the skipper and the mate knew the soundings as though they were pilots born : they knew 'em like the inside of their hats. The old *Fair Maid* seemed to get littler and littler there in the shadow of the land as she held her nose straight for it as though she'd butt her way through the forests that came down to the water's edge. The big mate conned her from the fore-topsail yard, and the skipper was as easy in his mind while he smoked a long cigar at the break of the poop as if he'd been in his own High Street. And all of a sudden when I reckoned to see the *Fair Maid* picking flowers with her jib-boom the land opened on us most magical and, with a little steady air that kept us going, right into it we went. But, after a long narrow neck, the passage opened out and all was peace in a strange land-locked harbour as tight as any bottle, and with a cork in it we'd have been there for ever but for the hand of God and the strange workings of those fiery mountains in such wondrous seas. It was very peaceful and there was no fear in my heart, nor did I bode evil. 'Twas a round harbour, and there are many such, and the mate said such places had been fiery mountains that had sunk down with the tops of them still above the water. But there were high hills round this, even though she had sunk down and had let water into the circle of high hills where once was great fire. For all round us on every far island there was fiery mountains, such as shake their sides and spit fire and smoke and open out and loose melted rock upon the sea. And whether or no they do harm they have always a pipe between their teeth

and they sit there smoking, smoking. All along Java and Sumatra that's the way with the fiery mountains. They blink at you out of their loftiness and sometimes die down and are seen no more. There's the like nearer home, Volcano and Stromboli. I've seen them blinking red just as I've seen greater mountains in Eastern seas. And there we was, all quiet and peaceful and hunky, so to speak. But what I want you men to know is that the *Fair Maid* never went out the common way she went in to that round harbour! You'd not guess the how or the why or the wherefore in a whole month of Sundays; no, nor in a thousand years of long Sundays. 'Tis a great thing to think on and 'twould be a mighty puzzle to any sailorman who'd had no lofty thoughts or great trials and had not been shaken in the palm of the hand of the Lord! Ah, but here I am sitting comfortable on a wooden bench by a good fire with a glass of hot liquor in my fist, and there's none, no, not one, of the fine men that was in the *Fair Maid*, as I remember 'em breasting the rail and looking ashore, who's yet alive. And yet they said:

" 'Tis a fair wonder of a safe harbour we're in! "

" But all those sailormen are dead, and our mate too. He was a fine man all over, and we respected each other for our strength, but never tried it man against man. And you'll be wondering how it was they're all dead men, and him so fine a man. And you'll be saying 'cannibals' and 'strange wild beasts' and 'sea serpents' maybe, for I see this kind of talk in the eyes of you. But what do you know, mates? You're only a lot of longshore fishermen and what should you savvy of the wonders of the

deep? You're good men at your trade and it's a fine thing to bring home a great haul of fish. But, as for me, I'd as soon be a farmer and milk Crumple and stick a pig fiercely. Aye, and you're herring hunters and a lot of them make a hurrah day for you. Oh, but you're proud that day when you come in loaded up with herrings! But I've seen for fish the mighty whales, the spermaceti and the rorquals and the wonders of the deep and the great squids and all the terrors of the deep. Yet none of those took my fine mates or that wholesome and noble ship the *Fair Maid of Perth*. That night the weather was wildly hot; you never felt the likes of it. This very night I heard one of you say, ' 'Tis warm.' And that little man over yonder wiped his wet face with a rag and allowed it was awful hot. 'Tis cold to what I've known and I might well shiver in it. Come, young woman, give me more hot brandy and I'll tell these old customers of yours my high yarn of the *Fair Maid*. 'Twas long ago it happened, yet, even now, old as I am, and I'm a mighty age, I'm strong. But when I was young I could have reached up and scoffed the moon and stars by main strength and the power of my teeth. Do you hear that, mates? "

" Oh, yes, we hear you," said little John Jose.

And the others said among themselves that the teller of tales was a strange man; they knew not what to make of him. But they settled themselves eagerly in their hard seats and held their peace that he might talk.

" Well, there we was," said the stranger, " and as I said the heat was horrid. And some of us would

go aloft to the main-royal-yard night or day to look over the biggest gap to the winking and blinking old mountain, which was mighty hot and fiery. Sometimes such mountains wave to and fro and the houses set under them open and throw folks out and close up and fall in just like a pack of cards. And the sea rises up and comes ashore as it did at Sunda, when the big hill blew out like a cylinder head and there was a hole in the nature of the earth and the sea rushed roaring into it. And the water boiled living creatures unnumbered. Ah, but God's a great man-of-war when He goes out to fight; He can slay his millions in a minute. And there we lay at anchor with the glass going up and the glass going down and playing a dreadful hanky-panky, and the sky all a monstrous colour and the moon blue and hot smells in the air. And the second night says I to myself, 'I'll away aloft to the main-royal-yard and smoke my pipe and take a look at the winker and blinker that the men let on about so much.' So I went aloft, it being then two bells in the first watch, and looking out towards the south-east I saw nothing. There was no blinker there and I rubbed my eyes and looked again, but there was never any red sign nor high lighthouse of God Almighty showing fine across the sea. And I thought that dead queer, and down on deck I went and going to the mate said to him :

“ ‘ Why, sir, that's a pretty tale they tell ! Liars they are. There's no winker and blinker to be seen up there, sir. ’

“ And with that he looked at me and said :

“ ‘ Why, bo'son, ain't it winking and blinking ?

That surprises me some, because I was up aloft myself last night and there was that same old fiery mountain with its flash-tricks, queer, very odd and frightful.'

"That's what he said. And there was no wind in any quarter of the compass, and the air was as heavy to breathe as muck, for it was a clock-calm. There was something about the nature of things that was against the nature of man, for I felt as if a typhoon was breeding when there are wild signs in the sky and smoking clouds and darkness round about the horizon and strange bellowings like far-off beasts in awful woods. Aye, like the wild dogs of the Cape, for off the Cape the Cape dogs do bark, and many sailormen who have shivered when they was warm in their bunks can bear witness to the same. Then me and the mate heard the natives on the shore cry out to their gods. And our men came out on deck uneasy saying they couldn't sleep, and they paddled about on deck in their own sweat, like cats that sweat through their feet. Some came and asked me what I reckoned to think, and I told them they was curs, for I feared neither man nor devil nor God as I thought then, but later I knew the difference when I'd been tried high and had become a lofty-minded man and big in my thoughts and more merciful. For now I reckon there was a bigness in me all the time even when I was a man of sin, as I am now, no doubt, though loftiness of mind makes a difference and a sense of loftiness is of the nature of grace. There have been times when I thought the Lord said to Himself and to His angels, 'Here's a sinner, yet he that has the makings of a man in



him shall have a cup of grace.' But though I feared nothing, or said so, my heart inside me quavered queerly; it was as if something unnatural was to happen and my inward nature foresaw it. I had not less than another's nature, but more. And now, in the very middle of the night, for I had just struck eight bells myself, there was an awful roaring and it was as if a mighty hand came up through the deep water and pounded the *Fair Maid* on her keel and shook the guts out of her and us. After there came a heavy silence for a while that almost struck a man like a blow in the face. Then all the crowd ran out on deck again, some holding to each other and saying, 'What is it?' Three even laid their hands on me, but I shook them off. And I heard the sound of the roaring sea as it broke outside our island on all the big beaches round about, and the sea came in through the harbour entrance and rose us up feet like a great bore rushing into a river, no allowance. Some of the men went down on their knees and others came crying to me and the mate. And the 'old man' ran up on the poop looking forty ways for Sunday, for the fear of God was in his heart. Yet all the same he stood at the break of the poop and said in a quiet voice:

" 'Tis all right, my men, this kind of thing happens frequent in the Eastern seas.'

"But he shook in his shoes. And when the day came there was still a big darkness and we all reckoned we'd been in that inner harbour long enough, so we put the boats out and started to tow the *Fair Maid* to the entrance. But the boats went ashore in the first narrows where the water had been

good and deep, for in the night the sea bottom had risen up, and there was our *Fair Maid* with no way out to the great seas. Then our skipper, a high religious man he was, though very sinful, stood at the break of the poop and tore his hair. And he said :

“ ‘ Oh, but this is most unnatural. I never heard the like. What will we be doing ? ’ ”

“ And the mate lifted up his big eyebrows and worked them up and down again and scratched his cheek with his finger but said nothing. He'd a hard and shiny skin on him but no beard, only here and there a stray hair as coarse as a rope yarn. And he was the only man aboard that could stand up to me. So he shook his bull head again and so did the young second mate after him. And the ‘ old man ’ cried out quite sudden and savage :

“ ‘ Why, damn your eyes, you're a hopeful lot, you're a hopeful lot ! ’ ”

“ Then I heard the men in the boats sing out. The boat they went ashore in couldn't get off. We seed 'em rise up just as if they was on a bank and the tide ebbed beyond knowledge. But they cried out to us that even now the sea bottom was pushing itself up while the water bubbled and boiled about us and there was a great shake in the hills. And one of the hills, with a sound of thunder, fetched away from its ancient moorings and fell into the channel. And them fine men was all dead and covered up. And those that were still aboard cried out and some took to their knees. But I remember one just taking out his pipe and filling it very quiet and striking three matches and letting each go out. I remember his

name, it stuck in my mind, for he threw his pipe overboard and looked surprised at himself. And that same while there was three others on their knees at the spare topmast, praying so hard it'd surprise the most religious among you. For sweat ran down them. And the water bubbled heavy with air in it, white water and foaming, and there were jets of steam that rose out of it like great white feathers. And the 'old man' tore his beard. So the mate laid hold of him and said :

" ' Why, sir, what are you doing a-tearing of your beard ? ' "

" But the *Fair Maid* belonged to the ' old man ' and he loved her more than his mother. And, being religious, it seemed the sense of his sins got hold of him and so he tore his beard. Likewise the sense of my sins got hold of me, but I was proud and shook them off, being young and in the gayness of my strength. But the skipper was getting old and he prayed right there at the break of the poop :

" ' Be merciful to me a sinner. ' "

" None of us knew what he meant though we knew well he was a hard case although so religious. And I remembered my father who'd been a minister and prayed over me frequent, but got nothing for his prayers but my going to sea. He was a holy great preacher and very powerful, with words at his command, even more than I have though I am his sinful son. But my father was a scholar and had great books beyond number and he drove his words before him like a flock of sheep, and they did his bidding before the Lord and he slung them at sinners like the sling-stones of David. And now

there came an awful sound; it was solid like millions of great guns going, the most immortal thunder that ever the angels of the air let off out of heaven or in any strange places of the earth, and the roar of it shook my in'ards and the props and pillars of my brain. The minds of some of the men tumbled in on them and they went mad. For there was a great and pitchy darkness upon us. And there we was as if we was down in a hollow a million miles below all light. Thereupon I called Lamps and bid him light up. But he was doddering on his bent knees alongside the spare topmast. I'd never reckoned to see Lamps on his knees, for he was a good-natured swine with a tongue as foul as Back Goree. So I lighted the lamps myself, for I couldn't see my way to disturb the likes of him at his prayers, for few they must be and his time was short. Aye, and now the sweat boiled out of us and the pitch in the seams of the deck boiled out and stuck to our bare feet. The sea bubbled and trembled and strong sea lights came into the moving water with a great shine. The sea was all a-boil with little shining shaking stars such as you see sometimes just on the crest of a wave in these Northern waters of a fine summer night. But, oh! the wonder of it there, and the shining, with all the little stars going in and out of it, all fire and gold, with great spots that had no darkness in them at all but were all tumbling water of fire and gold so that you could look for a million million miles past the very gates of hell and up to heaven again the other side of the earth. The great golden fire of the bubbling tumbling seas seemed to shine out on the dark woods and hills

that clipped us so close. For the hills bent over us and there was no difference in darkness between the woods and the sky. Presently the water boiled and the fiery lights went out and we padded round in "darkness with great gloomy lamps and held them up to each other's faces, saying in a whisper, 'Hullo, my lad, is it you?' And fine ashes began to fall out of the darkness and they was in our eyes and ears and thick on the sweat that ran down us and we looked like painted gods or savages out for war. And the mate said to me :

" ' Dip a bucket of water, bo'son, from over the side.'

" And to my hand it was nigh boiling. The water was moving and we heard noises come out of it and sometimes it seemed it was the fiery nature of the deep coming up and then it was the strange things of the sea, those that live at the deep bottom of it. And by this time the *Fair Maid* began to roll and we heard the water break first on one beach and then on the other, for so you might take a dish and lop the water first over one side and then over the other. I heard the second mate say to the mate :

" ' Why, sir, we're in the hands of Providence.'

" And the mate who was a good man but given to blasphemy and as strong as a bollard and as bold as brass, though as kind as any woman, said :

" ' I wish he'd hold us steady !

" That's what the mate said, he wished he'd hold us steady. And there came a thump upon the keel of the *Fair Maid* as if the bottom rose on us. When I went for'ard to see how the cable grew, she that had been lying easy at a fairish scope was up and

down as if she was hove short and down by the head, ready to break the hook out of the ground. And I hiked myself about and fetched the mate. He looked down at the cable and scratched his bull-head and swore a great oath the length of the mainbrace. And he said :

“ ‘Slack away, bo’son, or the hawse pipes will be cut down to the water’s edge if she holds and rolls.’

“ But all of a sudden she broke the mud-hook out of the ground and rose up half a fathom.

“ ‘The Lord help us,’ said I.

“ ‘He helps those that help themselves,’ said the mate as bold as brass, more bold than he would have done a bit later.

“ But, though he allowed that the men should turn in, none would, so we kept watch together. And one said :

“ ‘Let’s sing.’

“ But others said :

“ ‘Oh, hush it, hush it!’

“ For they didn’t like to hear the sound of their own voices. And still the glass tumbled down. And the mate called to me and allowed it was so and said :

“ ‘I’ve got a kinkle as to its meaning.’

“ ‘What is its meaning, sir?’ I asked.

“ ‘Why,’ said the mate, ‘it’s not the weather, but we’re rising up!’

“ And I didn’t tumble, whereon and wherefore he called me seventeen unholy names when I said it was the bottom going down. I know now that he had the sow by the right ear, for the water was

rising us in the round lake that we was in. And soon a little light came through, a grey scaring sort of glimmer, and we saw strange sea beasts that squirmed in the water as they boiled and some lay out big lengths dead. And the mate said to me when the grey light grew and the deeper darkness passed away :

“ ‘ By the glass we’re thousands of feet up,’ said he, grinning. ‘ We’ve risen up tremendous in the night, nigh to the tops of the mountains, bo’son.’ ”

“ So I looked out around and now the mountains was little and the lake was bigger. And the men, hearing us, came aft too, some of them, and said :

“ ‘ Oh, sir; oh, sir ! ’ ”

“ That’s what they said. Just ‘ Oh, sir ! ’ And one young chap let on :

“ ‘ Oh, sir, it’s awful, awful hot ! ”

“ Then he caught hold of the mate, and as the mate turned, angry-like, the boy keeled over and went down on deck with a heavy wallop. We brought him to for a bit and laid him out flat, but he never left the spot we laid him on. And the ‘ old man ’ was walking to and fro on the poop in his pyjamas wiping his face with a bandana, wringing his hands and shaking his head. And still the mate kept on saying :

“ ‘ Bo’son, we’re rising up ! ’ ”

“ He kept on saying it, no allowance. And of the heat three men died that day. They was all nice fine men and they struggled and looked up and clutched at their throats, and went down wallop and struggled a little while, not very long. And one of them said, ‘ Oh, Lord ! ’ That’s what he said, and

gasped like a fish and flip-flapped a little and was gone. The rest of us was down around 'em holding our lamps for them to die by, for the darkness was on us once more. All the time there was a devil in the land, for all the shut-up earthquakes and the mighty fiery cisterns of the Lord was working in the underneath parts of the world. But at last the skipper, with his long white beard and his white face, made out to say :

“ ‘ Cheer up, men, we'll be all right, we'll be all right.’ ”

“ And by and by they passed the word for'ard for me. I went aft stripped to the waist as if I was a pirate at a gun in the old days, and the mate bid me to take one of the boats that was still over the side and go ashore and climb up the hill so that I could tell them whether the sea was down below or on a main level with us. I asked one of the men to come with me, and none of them would though I called them all the curs I could lay my tongue to, and I lambasted them and their mothers and their maids with a devil's tongue which I'd got then when I was mad. For in those days I was a wild man and an arguier and a rare jaw-me-down and few could tackle me. But at last the boy, little Tom that was in the mate's watch, wiped his hand across his mouth and said :

“ ‘ I'll come with you, bo'son. ”

“ And, oh, it was mighty dark when I and the lad got into the boat and I sculled her through the thick ash on the water. It was a little lighter when I got ashore and struggled through the dry brush and deep ash, labouring in my breath. At last I



came up to the gap in the hills and stood and looked down. And fine breathable air came to me just for a while and I filled my heavy lungs. As I looked out in the thick darkness I could see no sign of water, but I had the feelings of being lifted high in a bad dream. And I set my lantern on a rock and climbed down a bit and came to a big rock with no way down past it. So I laid there and put my hands to my ears and heard the roat of our island shore, deep, very deep below me. Aye, there I heard the roat of the shore below me and our sole ship was up aloft carried in the hands of the Lord, and beneath me was the great roaring sea beating and lashing on rocks that hadn't seen the light since the holy foundations of the world. Having been witness to this I climbed back, stumbling through the ashes and the shaking trees and the darkness, to my own little light high up above me on the rock. I looked for death and the end of all things. And soon I called out :

“ ‘Tommy, where are you?

“ ‘And the little chap piped bravely :

“ ‘Here I am, bo’son. This is the way, bo’son.

“ ‘I remember his words. He was a good boy and had a mother in Plymouth. And when we came aboard I went aft to the Captain and said :

“ ‘You’re right, sir, we’re a terrible long ways up.’

“ ‘Thereupon I told them how I’d listened with my hands to my ears and had heard the wash of breakers below me. It was a strange hard trial of God for sailormen to be aloft in such high waters. And the mate scatted his bull-head and the second

greaser laughed very queer. At that time the lungs of me, the strongest man in the ship, laboured heavy and my legs were heavy on me. And the Captain who was oldish and fat said one word or two: aye, what he said was, 'My God!' and he keeled over and gave a kick or two, and they was quiet kicks. He was a gentleman always. And that's the way he died. Having laid him straight I went for'ard to the men and told them, and one of them keeled over. And the rest kept on saying as they choked:

" 'Oh, bo'son, this is bloody awful!

" Soon there was but me and the mate and poor little Tom Duckett from Plymouth the only ones alive in the good old *Fair Maid*. Oh, but she was the ship I loved, and being bo'son and careful of her I had as much joy in seeing her shipshape as ever any man had about a great king's ship, for though she was small she was very fast and sea-kindly and a wholesome and noble ship. And there was only three of us alive and the weight on my chest I could scarce a-bear. But all the time little Tommy followed me around, and presently as I had hold of him he'd have keeled over but for me. And I called to the mate and picked the lad up in my arms, and the mate and I went up aloft with him, but when we came to the main-top Tommy died. I laid him down there with his hands crossed upon his breast and the mate and I went right up to the main-royal yard hoping there'd be something to breathe there. The mate was surely thinking of those he'd never see again and the tears ran down his face. And I said:

“ ‘ Don’t, sir, don’t ! ’

“ That’s what I said. And on my speaking, the *Fair Maid* in the boiling water did a strange heave and tumble and the water bubbled up in fountains like great mounds. The *Fair Maid* she nid-nodded in those strange waters so high up towards the sky of heaven. And the dryness was awful and the parrals creaked and every block cheeped a bit now and then, and her uneasy motion was uneasy for us, we being so weak and heavy in our breathing and overpowered in our minds by the great calamity and disaster of the high water. So we cut away the port and starboard gaskets of the royal and made ourselves fast up aloft there, and the *Fair Maid* went heaving and shaking with all the dead men down on her deck. Then a little more light came down to us and we saw the hills and the shore. And there was a great mound of bubbling water in the midst of our lake like a big rounded breast and about it there was thick ashes. Then the mate said we was got to the tops of the hills and soon the water would fall over them and the *Fair Maid* would sail downr thousands of feet. The moorings of his mind had fetched away and it grieved me sore for he was a fine man and strong and knew his work. But madness always made me tremble, for I felt then in my inward mind that the moorings of a man’s intellects are not the strength they might be. Yet I was still strong and kept a hard grip on my wambling mind, but the mate’s mind was gone and he tore away his shirt and I saw the great frame of the man, and the arch of his chest like a bridge and the muscles laid in and out of him

like woven sennit and his arms as mighty as mine. But weakness was in them and in his brain. I could see his heart was giving way and he died very hard. So I'd seen a big fish turn over sideways in the bubbling water and struggle a bit and then struggle no more. And there was our mate with a gasket round him and round the mast and him all sunk down, hanging in his lashings like wet canvas in the brails. And for a long time after he was dead, or so I reckoned, the muscles in his skin jumped like little fish. But maybe he wasp't as dead as those who strewed the deck below. And then the big darkness rolled off sudden in a breeze, as if they up aloft had slid the scuttle off the deck of the world. And being all alone and very sorrowful and aghast I own I looked for the great Captain or some great angel mate of his to shove his head out of the skies above me and sing out 'Below there!' And now there was all the stars, very bright and fine in their rows and ranks, hung up like jewels and like lamps, some near and some far. But the littler stars were like seed pearls scattered. The moon herself hung sideways, like a horse-shoe for the world's luck to fall out of, but she hitched herself over a high-lifted spike of mighty mountain rock. And with the waters rising it seemed I could see through far gaps to the Eastern sea where there was a little glow like the climbing dawn. But sleep kept on coming over me like the march of the tides. And suddenly as I woke again it was the dawn, clear and cold. And the stars were gone out in the east and the moon that was off her peak was like a crescent that I've seen in Eastern pictures on the

head and brow of the young dawn. But waters still came up from the great springs of the world. And I says to myself, says I :

“ ‘ When she’s filled right up and cuts her way out we’ll be launched through the dock gates of God’s waterways ten thousand feet above the sea.’

“ I have a strange notion that I sang hymns and made my prayers to the dawn, the great maid of the East who puts the stars out with her hands: she who had a young moon upon her brow and her golden feet upon the Eastern world. And the terrific heat was gone and I hugged myself and shivered as the sun made his way through a great gap and winked at me. But I cursed him to his face. And now the *Fair Maid* took a notion and a motion with the draft of the water or the little wind out of the east to go away to the north-west and see the lowest gap in the hills. Soon I began to hear very great waters thundering, and staring eager I saw the waters fall out of the littlest low gap. And the old hooker jiggled and danced and turned round about and went faster as though she was laid hold of by the tide. For a long time now I’d cast off my lashings and, standing on the royal yard, I hugged the mast close and looked out on the world all by my lone. And down below, the dead men were dotted about just where they’d lopped down. But I looked out to the east and west and the high waters were green and blue with the blue of the early sky. And soon they were on a slope like the rapids of a river, and the water was streaky with running ash. And at that time the old *Fair Maid* went like an arrow up to the

gap, and we came to the narrows and I heard the thunder of the tumbling waters and the hills bowed down with trees upon their crests that fell into the flood and were washed away like trash upon a rising river. And soon the *Fair Maid* was drawn on the streaming water, oh, very fast she went, and I waved my hands and cried out:

“ ‘ Hurrah ! Hurrah ! ’ ”

“ So she stood out through the land and came to an awful pitch in the water and I saw the world beneath me and the open sea and the islands, the silent peaceful islands thousands of feet below. And in my mind, loosed from its moorings, 'twas as if I saw all the lands of the world and the big seas, Asia and Europe and Africa and the great Americas and the far shining oceans of the spread world. And here was death and none could save me and yet I feared nothing; for the fear of death had passed in the bitter night. It seemed unto me that I was already dead and that nought but my spirit stood upon the main-royal-yard, dancing, dancing ! And at that very moment the sweet old *Fair Maid* went over the crest in a roar of waters which was like the voice of God. Even as I sang prayers of praise and pieces of great psalms that came out of my heart we pitched a thousand feet or ten thousand, and I was spanged out into space. 'Tis in my mind that I fell all among the suns and stars and I reached out to them. So I fell for years among the suns and moons and stars till a great darkness came to me. 'Twas as if I fell asleep and when I woke or seemed to wake I lay upon a big shining plain that was a great flat polished pink pearl or some fine flat jewel, and I

rose up on it in a great calm and feared nothing, though it seemed to me that a mighty face looked at me, a face that was wonderful beyond the words of any man though he drove them before him with power as my old father did. And I stood up and spoke and said :

“ ‘ Where am I ? ’

“ And I heard a voice answer :

“ ‘ Little man, you’re on my thumb-nail.’

“ And it was not strange to me nor did I wonder at the nature of him whose thumb-nail was a polished jewel or some great marble plain.

“ ‘ Your thumb-nail ? ’ said I, as bold as brass and bravely. ‘ Then, who are you ? ’

“ ‘ Little man, I am an angel,’ said the voice.

“ ‘ Are you a great angel ? ’ I asked.

“ But he answered :

“ ‘ No, little man, I am but one of the least of the angels, and I work upon the outskirts of the heavenly stars. And thus it was that I reached out and plucked you off a star and stood you here upon my nail.’

“ It all seemed natural to me and I feared nothing. But I looked over the edge of his thumb-nail and I saw the earth and her comfortable moon and her sun that was very busy warming her. And there was a city on the earth that was very dear to me that shone like a jewel in the ear of a sweet maid. So I said :

“ ‘ Angel, put me back upon the earth.’

“ For there was no comfort in the polish of him and I hadn’t the faith in him I’d have in a good kind man. So :

“ ‘ Put me back upon the earth, angel,’ said I, ‘ for it’s warm there.’ ”

“ I hankered for my home. And what I thought was that I’d rather go to hell than stay aloft with him. That’s what I thought in my mind. And whether I said so or not to the angel as I stood on his thumb-nail, it seemed to me that he knew it, for what he said was, in a kind of politeful way :

“ ‘ Ashes to ashes and dust to dust, little man.’ ”

“ Whereupon he lifted up his other mighty finger and thumb and spanged me out into great space. And as I fell I knew not whether I was bound for a port in hell or the dear comfortable earth. And as I fell so I fell asleep, or so it seemed, and maybe I slept for a million years. But I woke up lying on strange home-like warm sand and the feeling of the warm earth was at the back of me, and there was the heavy comfortable smells of the East about me and a fine brown woman sitting alongside of me crying. I felt weak as I looked up at her, but I knew I’d done great things and seen more than many, and my mind was still lofty though I was as naked as a needle upon the hot warm sand. I looked at my own big arms and saw the old familiar tattooing of them and the names of the girls that I’d loved and I knowed that I was I. Ah, there was comfort in the pattern of the tattooing ! And I was all alone but for this kind weeping woman, for I was the last of the crowd of the old *Fair Maid*, and she at the bottom of the sea and all her fine men dead and deep in the sea. Then the brown woman rose me up and took me by the hand and led me like a little child through comfortable dark woods. ’Twas a long time



after that I got the smell of the North in my mind and the thought of these sweet clouded skies and the Northern tumbling seas all so grey and taking. And I sickened of the East and her skies were a terror to me and so were the big open nights. I desired the plain old stars we have in our own country. So I swam through a sea of sharks to a ship that passed and they took me in. And it may be I'll see the East again and that good woman waiting on the beach, but it's great now to hear the old familiar winds roaring and to look out and see the same old moon that stood on the brow of the dawn and to see her flying through the scud like a tight ship in a gale, and to reach out one's hands to one's own countrymen, though they are strange little people I could break between my thumb and forefinger, or, like the great angel who was also a little angel, could take them up and put them on my thumb-nail and spang them to the Southern seas. 'Tis a fine thing to be home after years though all are dead one knew, all gone down like the old *Fair Maid*, for there are still the places they loved and the air they breathed when they lived and thought kindly of a man and hoped for their wanderer to come back once more, once more."

And the old man ceased his tale and pulled at his beard and smiled and nodded his head. For a space there was silence. The others nodded their heads solemnly and kept their eyes fixed on him. But at last little John Jose spoke.

"Oh, sir; oh, mates, 'tis a great story," said John Jose, "a most wonderful tale. The far world's a strange place for those that see the marvels of it.

But as for me I am no more than an unconsidered man who goes a-fishing and the deep waters are beyond me."

"Aye, that's as may be," said the old man, "it isn't given to us all to see what I've seen or to live through it. Yet great and little have their places, for the world's great and little, so there's a place for you and a place for me. But it's a pleasant thing to be back in old England among such company and I'll ask you to take a drink with me. Give it a name. And you, ma'am, I'll ask kindly to get the drinks for the men and for me."

And one by one they said they would drink with him again.

"'Tis a very strange tale you've told us," they said, in a nodding chorus.

"Aye," said the stranger, "but it's a wonderful, wonderful world and who shall fathom it?"